THE CONCEPT OF MALE HONOUR IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D. IN HISTORY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM.

1996

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University of Durham Ph.D. Thesis 1996

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the importance of honour to men as a value and power system in seventeenth century England. It compares literary and fictional sources which prescribed how men could achieve honour, with the church court records of Durham and the court of Arches to show how some men chose to put these ideas into practice. Chapter two examines the different sexual and non sexual components of male honour. It discusses the extent to which ideas of male honour differed between social classes and how far the concepts of honour changed over time. Chapter three shows that displaying sexual honour was vital to the acquisition of manhood for men of all social classes. It is argued that male honour was dependent upon men sexually controlling their wives, daughters, and female servants. The desire to maintain this sexual honour meant that insults upon a wife's sexual reputation were often interpreted by men as slurs on their honour. Hence chapter four shows that there may have been male as well as female honour at stake when wives fought defamation suits in the church courts after sexual slander. Chapter five argues that loss of male sexual honour could have profound consequences on men's lives within and outside the household. Men could experience their loss of honour both materially and emotionally. It was the fear of loss of honour which could lead men to adjust their behaviour within their homosocial and heterosexual relationships, as chapter six outlines. Some men became suspicious of the intentions of their male friends, and in their jealousy attempted to restrict their wives' freedoms. The chief dilemma for men was that once they became convinced that their honour had been compromised by their wives' behaviour, there was no easy course of action which they could adopt to restore honour. Both legal and extra legal actions held pitfalls. The thesis concludes that a system of male honour which rested on female behaviour could never prove secure or enduring, and that men were very likely to seek a revision of the meanings of male and female honour, if this could secure their authority in the household and in wider society more effectively. Although the system of male honour which this thesis examines was not confined to the seventeenth century, it is argued that this century saw both its apogee and the beginnings of its decline.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

The research for this thesis was funded by a two year British Academy Studentship, and a one year Durham University Studentship. It is research which would not have been begun without the encouragement of Anthony Fletcher, who as a supervisor has always found time to provide much valued support, discussion, and detailed attention to my work. He has been an inspiring teacher of the historian's craft.

I am very grateful for the specialist help of the staff at the Department of Archives and Special Collections and Palace Green Library in Durham. In particular I would like to thank Margaret McCollum, Linda Drury, Joe Fewster, and Beth Rainey for sharing with me some of their expertise of early modern records. I am also grateful to Alison Roberts, Colin Gorman and Hilda Guy. Their smiling welcome, interest in my research, attention to my needs, and breadth of knowledge were so important to me. I am convinced that Durham offers a uniquely special and unparalleled research environment.

I owe particular thanks to Tim Stretton whose faith from the start in my ability to do this research has meant much, and who has painstakingly read and commented upon many of the drafts of this thesis. For suggestions of reading, and the loan of unpublished material I am also grateful to Jeremy Black, Miranda Chaytor, Richard Cust, Brian Gibbons, Margaret Harvey, Matthew Johnson, Subha Mukherji, Pete Rushton, Garthine Walker, and Helen Weinstein. The friendship of Helen Berry, Sue Lambley, Heloise Lampert, Sophia Mavropoulou, Jane Roscoe, and Jo Story has been of vital support, and I continue to value. I would also like to thank the staff at the School of History and Welsh History at the University of Wales, Bangor for their welcome over the last few months. Finally, I owe the greatest debt to Keith Bartlett and my mum, Margaret Foyster for their unfailing love and encouragement which has sustained, encouraged and enabled me to complete this PhD. I hope this thesis would have made my dad Michael Foyster proud.

Preface

For ease of comprehension all spellings have been modernised in this thesis except for the titles of printed primary sources. Punctuation and capitalisation have not been modernised. The year is taken to begin on 1st January for all court records. The numbers of cases for the Court of Arches are those given in the J. Houston, Index of the cases in the records of the Court of Arches in Lambeth Palace Library, 1660-1913 (London,1972).

The dates of ballads where given are taken from the editors notes to The Roxburghe Ballads (W. Chappell ed. vols.I-III; and J.W. Ebsworth ed. vols.IV-IX), or from the catalogue compiled by H. Weinstein of The Pepys Ballads (R. Latham ed., Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College vol.II, Part i). These dates are based on the date the ballads were printed or registered with the Stationers Company, or on known biographical details of their authors, printers, or publishers. All dates of ballads given are approximate and should be treated with caution, however, since a ballad could be in oral circulation or in illegal printed circulation long before it was officially printed, published, and registered.

The dates of Renaissance plays are taken from the chronological table in A.R. Braunmuller and M. Hattaway (eds), The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama (Cambridge,1990). The dates of Restoration plays are taken from the editor's notes to each edition. All dates of plays refer to the earliest known performance or first edition. A full list of plays consulted can be found in the bibliography.

Abbreviations

DDR.V.	Durham consistory court deposition book
CA.	Court of Arches
Ee	Court of Arches personal answer
Eee	Court of Arches deposition
Roxburghe	W. Chappell, (ed.),The Roxburghe Ballads vols. I-III, (London,1871-1880), and J.W. Ebsworth, (ed.), The Roxburghe Ballads vols. IV-IX, (London,1883-1899)
Pepys	W.G. Day, (ed.), The Pepys Ballads (facsimile, 5 vols., Cambridge,1987)
Pepysian Garland	H.E. Rollins, (ed.),A Pepysian Garland: Black Letter Broadside Ballads of the Years 1595-1639 (Cambridge,MA,1971)
Euing	The Euing Collection of Broadside Ballads, introduction by J. Holloway, (Glasgow,1971)
Shirburn	A. Clark, (ed.), The Shirburn Ballads (Oxford,1907)
M.P.	Martin Parker, ballad author, (d.1656?)

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining male honour:

> Honour...is so near a neighbour unto man's life, that he is ever accounted cruel to himself, that is careless of his Reputation...for dishonour is more to be feared than death, and Honour more to be desired than life.[1]

Over the past twenty years historians have come to recognise that "considerations of honour, good name, and reputation were of central importance" in early modern England.[2] They have studied the concept of honour by looking at the records of the church courts where honour was disputed or defended. Men and women responded to slurs on their honour by bringing defamation cases to these courts, and historians have interpreted the rising number of defamation cases through the sixteenth into the seventeenth centuries as evidence of increased concern amongst contemporaries about their honour.[3] Honour has also been proved to be of consequence in other early modern countries including France, Germany, Italy and Spain.[4] The importance of the concept of honour to seventeenth century thinking has been confirmed by the work of

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[1] F. Markham, The Booke of Honour (London,1625), p.1.

[2] J.A. Sharpe, Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York Borthwick Papers,58, (York,1980), p.1.

[3] Sharpe, Defamation, pp.3-4,8-9; M. Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England,1570-1640 (Cambridge,1987), p.299-300; C.A. Haigh, 'Slander and the Church Courts in the Sixteenth Century', Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 78, (1975), p.2; L. Gowing, 'Women, Sex and Honour: The London Church Courts, 1572-1640', (University of London, PhD,1993), p.9.

[4] N.Z. Davis, Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France (Stamford,1987),pp.38-40,96-101; R.A. Nye, Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France (Oxford,1993), p.1-71; L. Roper, 'Will and Honor: Sex, Words and Power in Augsburg Criminal Trials', Radical History Review, 43, (1989), p.45-71; E.S. Cohen, 'Honor and Gender in the Streets of Early Modern Rome', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, XXII:4 (1992), p.597-625; M.I. Millington and A.S. Sinclair, 'The Honourable Cuckold: Models of Masculine Defence', Comparative Literature Studies, vol.29, no.1, (1992), p.1-19.

academics in other disciplines. C.L. Barber has found over two hundred plays written between 1591 and 1700 which referred to honour, and C.B. Watson's study of honour in contemporary philosophy and Shakespeare's drama has led him to conclude that men at this time were "intoxicated" with honour and with "outward repute."[5] Anthropologists surveying other primitive cultures, particularly in the Mediterranean, have found that the principles of honour and shame are fundamental in shaping everyday attitudes and behaviour.[6] Archaeologists and historians of visual culture have found abundant evidence of contemporaries' desire to display their honour on the tombstones, memorials and medallion portraits of parish churches.[7] It would appear that in seventeenth century England reminders of the importance of honour were everywhere.

Recent work within the field of early modern gender history has been vitally important in contributing to our understanding of the concept of honour.[8] This has been

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[5] C.L. Barber, The Idea of Honour in the English Drama 1591-1700 (Goteborg,1957); C.B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour (Princeton,1960); see also, C.L. Barber, The Theme of Honour's Tongue: A Study of Social Attitudes in English Drama from Shakespeare to Dryden (Goteborg,1985); and N. Council, When Honour's at the Stake: Ideas of Honour in Shakespeare's Plays (London,1973).

[6] See for example, J.K. Campbell, Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community (Oxford,1964); J.G. Peristiany (ed.), Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society (London,1965); F.G. Bailey (ed.), Gifts and Poison: The Politics of Reputation (Oxford,1971); J. Pitt-Rivers, The Fate of Shechem or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean (Cambridge,1977).

[7] N. Llewellyn, The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c.1500-1800 (London,1991), and 'Honour in Life, Death and in the Memory: Funeral Monuments in Early Modern England', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (forthcoming); K.A. Esdaile, English Church Monuments 1560-1840 (London,1946).

[8] The most important study of female honour has been written by Gowing, 'Women'; for other studies of gender history which include reference to honour see for example, T. Stretton, 'Women and Litigation in the Elizabethan Court of Requests' (University of Cambridge PhD,1993); L. Roper, Oedipus and the Devil (London,1994); G.M. Walker, 'Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern Cheshire' (University of

particularly true for the concept of female honour, upon which these studies have tended to concentrate. These historians have addressed many of the key issues to the study of honour, and their work forms an invaluable basis for this thesis. However, this thesis will ask different questions of the sources of honour, since it is an added benefit for the historian of male honour that most of the sources concerning honour in the seventeenth century were written by men; from literary and fictional evidence to legal documentation. These sources provide indications of what male honour was thought to consist, and how it could be defended. Because of the inter-relatedness of male and female honour, these sources often also provide evidence of what men thought female honour should consist. Of course, such sources were often prescriptive in nature, and we cannot assume that women always behaved in ways which supported this male ideology, or acted simply as patriarchal puppets. In fact, as this thesis will show, it was male anxiety that women would not adhere to female honour codes that caused discord in many marriages. It is upon men's relationships with their wives that this thesis will focus.

This thesis argues that honour was a crucially important value system in early modern England. It will suggest that men and women gained honour by adopting and displaying behaviours or roles which were approved for their gender. But it will diverge from other historical studies in its interpretation of the differences in the meaning and the importance of honour for men and women. All research to date based on the church courts has focused on female honour, since in these courts there were numerically far more female than male plaintiffs fighting defamation suits. In particular, from these studies based on records from across the country, and

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Liverpool PhD,1994); A. Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800 (Yale,1995); M. Chaytor, 'Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth Century', Gender and History, 7, (1995), p.378-407.

throughout the early modern period, we have learnt much about the nature of female sexual honour as married women fought defamation suits over insults which were almost entirely sexual in nature.[9] Conclusions about the nature of male honour have been made in the light of these studies on female honour. It has been found that when men did turn to the church courts, it was in response to slanders which were non-sexual such as thief and liar. So it has been argued that whereas the sole tenet of female honour was sexual honesty or chastity, male honour was more complex, and based far more on non sexual behaviour. Honour was "inherently and absolutely gendered", and male and female honour so different that they were "incommensurable".[10] Conveniently categorised as a binary opposite to female honour, it has been argued that male honour could be unaffected by sexual behaviour. In the only historical survey yet to be published on male honour in the early modern period, Mervyn James confines the concept solely to the aristocracy, and denies that private behaviour could influence public reputation, "Men of honour could (and did) lie, cheat, deceive, plot, treason, seduce, and commit adultery, without incurring dishonour."[11] Although Lyndal Roper has suggested that male honour in early modern Germany could be concerned with management of the body, a wider definition of male honour in England has yet to be suggested.[12] Indeed, the most recent work on early modern manhood by Susan Amussen denies that sexuality was central to the

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[9] Sharpe, Defamation, pp.10,15-17,27-28; Ingram, Church Courts, p.300-303; S.D. Amussen, An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England (Oxford,1988), p.101-103; Gowing, 'Women', p.10-11; M. Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship: Ryton in the late 16th and early 17th centuries', History Workshop Journal, 10,(1980), p.25-26; T. Meldrum, 'A Women's Court in London: Defamation at the Bishop of London's Consistory Court, 1700-1745', London Journal, 19,1,(1994), p.8-13.

[10] Gowing, 'Women', pp.30,43,65.

[11] M. James, English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485-1642 (Past and Present Supplement 3) (The Past and Present Society,1978),p.28.

[12] Roper, Oedipus and the Devil, p.107-124.

construction of manhood.[13] There has been pioneering work conducted on male homosexuality and its relationship to honour, but we still know very little about the impact of heterosexual relationships upon male honour.[14]

This thesis argues that male honour has hitherto been defined too narrowly. By writing histories which confine women's concerns to the private and domestic realms, and men's to the public domain, Michael Roper and John Tosh maintain "both women's agency in the public sphere and the scope of men's private life have tended to be denied."[15] It is time that we understood more about men's personal, intimate and emotional experiences. We need to know what behaviours or qualities men needed to exhibit to win the approval for honour. Contrary to other research, this thesis will seek to argue that from whatever social classes men came sexual behaviour was crucial to male honour. It will seek to reveal much about men's attitudes to their relationships with women, and to their own sexuality. This will be attempted through the

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[13] S.D. Amussen, "The part of a Christian man': the cultural politics of manhood in early modern England', in S.D. Amussen and M.A. Kishlansky, (eds), Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays presented to David Underdown (Manchester,1995).

[14] A. Bray, Homosexuality in Renaissance England (London,1988); A. Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England', History Workshop Journal, 29, (1990), p.1-19; P. Morris, 'Sodomy and Male Honour: The Case of Somerset,1740-1850', in K. Gerard and G. Hekma (eds), The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe (New York,1989), p.383-406.

[15] M. Roper and J. Tosh, 'Introduction: Historians and the politics of masculinity', in M. Roper and J. Tosh (eds), Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800 (London,1991), p.12-13; wider definitions of female honour are beginning to be proposed see G. Walker, 'Boundaries of Female Honour: Community, Hierarchy, and Reputation in Early Modern England', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (forthcoming); A. Clark, 'Whores and gossips: sexual reputation in London 1770-1825', in A. Angerman, G. Binnema, A. Keunen, V. Poels, and J. Zirkzee (eds), Current Issues in Women's History (London,1989), p.236.

perspective of gender history. Gender history is a recent development in historical research which seeks to study the sexes not in isolation, but in relation to each other. For, as Natalie Zemon Davis has argued,

> It seems to me that we should be interested in the history of both women and men, that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus entirely on peasants. Our goal is to understand the significance of the sexes, of gender groups in the historical past. [16]

Since in the early modern period men and women were defined in terms of one another, as men learnt to suppress their feminine qualities, and women their masculine traits, it is crucial that we study men and women in this way, rather than as separate entities.[17] Within this framework, male and female honour, it will be shown, were also mutually dependant. The definitions of female honour were derived from the requirements of male honour. So, for example, as male codes of honour required them to be dominant figures, female codes of honour insisted on obedience and loyalty at every level of society. For men it was the dynamic of their relationships with women that determined their honour, in particular their sexual honour. Male honour may have had non sexual and sexual dimensions, but it will be demonstrated that it is meaningless to talk of a division into spheres of 'public' and 'private' honour. For just as men as well as women inhabited both public and private spheres, so reputation in

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[16] N.Z. Davis, '"Women's History" in Transition: The European Case', Feminist Studies, 3,(1975), p.90; for a more recent discussion of the impact of gender history on historical research see, J.W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', American Historical Review,91:5 (1986), p.1053-1075.

[17] L. Pollock, "Teach her to live under obedience': the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England', Continuity and Change, 4,2, (1989), p.231-258.

one sphere could powerfully affect reputation in the other.[18] In particular, this thesis will attempt to show how male sexual reputation could affect a man's standing in the wider community. It may seem surprising that since men's private lives and public lives were so inseparable in the eyes of contemporaries, historians to date have focused so narrowly on men as public figures. A study of male honour may begin to redress the balance.

Honour was a term used mainly by the upper sorts, there is only one reference to "honour" in the defamation cases which were brought by the middling and lower sorts to Durham consistory court between 1604 and 1631.[19] It was otherwise referred to as credit, good name, or reputation. It is the premise of this thesis that although men at different social levels used different terminologies to describe honour, all men understood that it was the reward of exhibiting specific sexual and non sexual behaviours. In this thesis the value attached to these behaviours is referred to as honour.

1.2 Sources for the study of male honour

One of the reasons why historians may have given narrow definitions to male and female honour is that they have traditionally studied the concept using only one source: church court records. Church court records show us the legal action that men and women inspired by notions of honour took, but they do not fully explain how these notions originated, were transmitted, and understood. In many ways then, these court records reveal the consequences of beliefs in honour, and not its causes. If we

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[18] For an attack on historian s' use of the terms "public" and "private" see A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', The Historical Journal, 36,2, (1993), p.383-414.

[19] DDR.V.8.f.24r; for the status of litigants at the consistory court see below, p.8.

look more closely at the culture of the period, at the ballads which were sung and read, and the plays that audiences watched, we may gain a closer understanding of the various ideas, values and beliefs of which the concept of honour was a part, and from which it took effect. By using ballads and drama in addition to church court records, it is also hoped that this thesis will provide a multi-dimensional picture of honour. For the participants or audience of ballads, those who went to plays, and those who went to law could vary in terms of social class and gender, as well as over time. The intended and actual functions of each of these sources were also diverse. If we are aware of these differences then it is possible that 'histories' rather than a 'history' of male honour can be written.

The witness statements, or 'depositions' recorded for two hundred and twenty-five defamation cases and four marriage separation cases in Durham consistory court are bound in volumes for 1604-1631, and consist of loose papers for the years 1633-34, 1636-37, 1662-63, 1664-65. They reveal a wealth of detail about the operation, language and defence of honour. The perspective on honour that we gain from these records is mainly from the middling sorts.[20] Durham church court material confirms the findings of other historians that whereas witnesses could be servants and labourers, litigants were usually yeomen, husbandmen and craftsmen.[21] It is vital to understand church court procedure to see how it affected the records which now survive. Deposition papers were presented by proctors to the judge along with the other formal documents relating to the case. During 'instance' causes, which were disputes between parties, these documents usually consisted of the 'libel' brought by the plaintiff, to

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[20] For a collection of essays which define the middling sorts see, J. Barry and C. Brooks, (eds), The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800 (London,1994).

[21] Sharpe, Defamation, p.17-18; Ingram, Church Courts, p.304; Gowing, 'Women', p.14.

which the defendant would reply, point by point. The defendant would sometimes produce a counter case known as the 'allegation', which the plaintiff would then answer. Witnesses would be called and answer to the facts alleged in the libel or allegation. Either party could also pose questions to the witnesses known as 'interrogatories'. Once a judge had the depositions and all the other papers in front of him he would issue a sentence. If a party was found guilty this would result in an admonition from the judge, penance, or in the worst cases excommunication. Disputes concerning defamation could also be brought to the church courts as 'office' cases. Court officers, parish ministers or churchwardens would inform the bishop or his representatives of those who had transgressed against church law and the court judge would then issue a formal list of articles or charges to the defendant. In most cases if the defendant denied the charges on oath he or she would be ordered to undergo 'compurgation' when he/she would have to find a specified number of neighbours to swear to their innocence. As Amussen has recognised, this process "gave reputation a legal standing", for if enough people could testify to a man's good name, then a case in the church courts could proceed no further.[22] In more serious cases, however, the judge could decide to call witnesses and prosecute the case through the same number of procedural stages as an instance case. Office cases for defamation were far rarer than instance cases: in Durham only twenty-one of the two hundred and twenty-five cases studied were brought as office cases.[23] Whatever the procedure in the church courts, if found guilty the defendant would have to undergo penance or excommunication.[24] In defamation cases, the motivation to use church courts may

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[22] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.99.

[23] For comparison of numbers of office and instance cases in other church courts see, Ingram, Church Courts, p.293.

[24] For consistory court procedure see, R. Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation (Oxford,1979), p.38-54; Ingram, Church Courts, p.43-58; R.A. Marchant, The Church Under the Law: Justice, Administration and Discipline in the Diocese of York 1560-1640 (Cambridge,1969), p.60-65.

well have lain with the punishments which they administered. Penance was a humiliation to suit the crime. It could take different forms: in 1692 a York man was sentenced to go to the house owned by the kinsmen of the man he had slandered, and in front of several members of the town elite admit that he had acted "wrongfully, rashly and unadvisedly", and that he was sorry to have uttered the slanders.[25] More frequently, those found guilty would be dressed in a white sheet and stood barefoot in a church or market place. Penance was an effective shaming ritual, admission of wrong, and a public vindication of reputation.[26] The large numbers of men and women who went to the church courts to fight defamation cases throughout the period must show that the grievances which some voiced about the operation of the church courts were not shared by all.[27]

If a party wanted to appeal a decision made in a consistory court he or she could have their case heard at York if they resided in the northern dioceses, or in the court of Arches for the province of Canterbury. All the documents relating to the suits in the lower courts would be copied into the process books of these courts of appeal. This thesis examines firstly, the surviving personal answers of the parties to the libels, articles, allegations and interrogatories, and secondly, the witness depositions of all cases for marriage separation from bed and board which were appealed to the court of Arches between 1660 and 1700. A total of ninety-two cases were studied. Full

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[25] J.A. Sharpe, "Such Disagreement betwyx Neighbours' Litigation and Human Relations in Early Modern England', in J. Bossy (ed.), Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West (Cambridge,1983), p.180-181.

[26] For examples of the different forms that penance could take see Ingram, Church Courts, p.53-54; R.H. Helmholz, 'Canonical Defamation in Medieval England', American Journal of Legal History, vol.XV, (1971), p.266-267; for an excellent example of the shame and humiliation that could be instilled by performing penance see, E.P. Thompson, Customs in Common (London,1991), p.502-503.

[27] C.Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (London,1964), p.298-343.

divorce which allowed for remarriage was not widely available until the Divorce Reform Act of 1857; instead couples could only lawfully separate 'from bed and board' if they could prove adultery and or life threatening cruelty. Parliamentary divorce was too expensive for most, and before 1700 only two private acts for divorce were introduced.[28] Matrimonial suits, which were fought either to dispute a marriage, or to end a marriage only formed about 10% of all the suits which were brought to the court of Arches. Many suits which were initiated were resolved out of court before they reached the personal answer or deposition stage. Since litigants would have to fund both the case in the lower court, and in the appeal court, the cost of bringing these cases may have encouraged many to pursue more informal means of marriage separation. Lawrence Stone only provides estimates of costs for eighteenth century separation suits, but the high cost of cases in the seventeenth century is probably reflected in the social status of most litigants.[29] In contrast with the consistory courts, litigants of gentry status in the court of Arches were not uncommon. Their witnesses, on the other hand, were often their domestic servants. Forty-three marriage separation cases were brought to the court of Arches on grounds of adultery, forty-two cases on grounds of cruelty, and seven cases brought for adultery and cruelty between 1660 and 1700. These often lengthy records reveal detailed and exciting evidence of married life, and show how male honour was affected by marriage breakdown, whether this was the result of adultery and /or cruelty.[30]

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[28] For general surveys on the history of divorce see, L. Stone, Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987 (Oxford,1990), and R. Phillips, Putting Asunder: A history of divorce in Western society (Cambridge,1988).

[29] Stone, Road to Divorce, p.187-190; for more on the cost of litigation in the consistory courts see below p.130-134.

[30] For court of Arches procedure see, M.D. Slatter, 'The Study of the Records of the Court of Arches', Journal of the Society of Archivists, vol.1, (1955), p.29-31, and Stone, Road to Divorce, p.33-41.

As Laura Gowing has explained, because there were so many stages in church court procedure the result is that their records are "composite texts, made up of layer upon layer of occasions, purposes and meanings". Gowing's research, Tim Stretton's thesis which looked at women's statements in the court of Requests, and recent work on early modern court records by Miranda Chaytor and Diane Purkiss, were all influenced by the conclusions of Davis's study of the narrators of pardon tales in sixteenth century France. Davis convincingly argued that court documents cannot be simply regarded as records of the voices of litigants and witnesses.[31] Court records are instead the product of many voices. For when litigants came to the church courts their arguments were framed by proctors, and their witnesses were prompted by the clerk to recall events which had occurred in the past. These oral accounts then became written texts shaped by the clerk to suit legal convention and ensure comprehensibility. The result is that the language of the records is frequently formulaic and stock phrases are often repeated. For example, witnesses who gave evidence in defamation cases often stated that the plaintiff "by reason of these slanderous speeches is worse thought of amongst her neighbours", words which were so frequently repeated that they must have often been inserted by the clerk.[32]

We also need to consider how far plaintiffs or defendants, and their witnesses shaped their stories to give meaning to a pattern of behaviour, and to present a convincing story of damaged honour to the judge. Certainly, in an appeal court such as the court of Arches in which lengthy personal answers of litigants survive, and in which

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[31] Davis, Fiction in the Archives; Gowing, 'Women', p.172-207; Stretton, 'Women and Litigation', p.208-254; Chaytor, 'Husband(ry)'; and D. Purkiss, 'Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child', Gender and History, 7, (1995), p.408-432.

[32] See for example, DDR.V.8.ff28v;79v;155v;166r;167r; 173r; 191v; 198r; 204r; 220r; 234r.

witnesses were asked to respond to often dozens of questions posed by litigants, it is easy to detect litigants and their counsel purposefully shaping accounts into meaningful and convincing narratives. As will be argued, it was often in husbands' interests to present stories of their wives' adultery and their own cruelty in a certain way to attempt to avoid shame, and to portray the other party as reckless and neglectful of their partner's honour.[33] But in a lower court such as Durham consistory court, in which only witness statements survive, and where on average witnesses only responded to three statements by litigants, with answers usually amounting to less than a folio in length, evidence for the careful and conscious construction of a narrative is more difficult to detect. With few questions posed to these witnesses it could be argued that less attention was given by plaintiffs and defendants to the structuring of their witnesses' answers. Furthermore, even though litigants or their proctors selected witnesses they could not be relied upon to provide convincing statements. For example, when Jane Garnett and her husband brought defamation suits against Mary Dobson in July 1618, Ralph Carr said that although he heard the Garnetts quarrelling with Mary, he did not pay any attention to what was said because he was "very busy writing".[34] John Johnson of Newcastle must have been equally frustrated with his witness Anthony Hall who in July 1606 was unable to narrate any story because when he had gone into the street to try and hear the argument between Johnson and John Rand he had been pulled back into the house by his wife.[35]

With so many different stories of the same event being told at each stage of the court procedure, varying due to individual experience and interpretation of the same event, the church courts could not hope to ever establish the 'truth' of a particular incident.

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[33] For examples and further discussion of this issue see below pp.194-198,216-218.
[34] DDR.V.10B.ff.373v,374r.
[35] DDR.V.8.f.166v; for a similar case see DDR.V.12.ff.124v,125r.

Instead, they sought to determine the most convincing interpretation of an event. The aim of this study is also not to attempt to discover "that mythical beast 'the Truth'", but to try to understand what insults and behaviour litigants and witnesses thought most damaging to honour, and in the more detailed cases, what method of story telling they believed needed to be employed to produce a convincing case to the court.[36]

Jim Sharpe, Martin Ingram and Gowing have all made comparisons between the honour of the litigants and witnesses who came to the church courts, and the honour observed by anthropologists in Mediterranean "honour and shame societies".[37] It is of perhaps of little surprise, given the differences in time and space, that Ingram has observed variations in the value attached to honour and the implications of dishonour between early modern England and some 1960's Mediterranean communities. In England the usual response to insult was not a revenge killing, and a slur on honour was usually regarded as only affecting the individual involved, rather than his or her family or even the wider community as well.[38] Sharpe has noted that women in early modern England appear to have had greater freedoms than those observed in some of the anthropological studies, and Gowing believes that the male bias of many anthropological accounts, which do not consider women's acceptance of the honour system, or their ability to negotiate their position within it, "make them dubious sources for any historical comparison."[39] However, if historians read the work of anthropologists with caution, and make comparisons which are informed about the cultural distinctions between different groups, the benefits of a cross disciplinary

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[36] Stone, Road to Divorce, p.29-33.
[37] The main anthropological studies referred to are, Campbell, Honour and Peristiany (ed.), Honour; for a useful summary of the theories put forward by anthropologists about honour see, P. Van Sommers, Jealousy (London,1988), p.111-127.
[38] Ingram, Church Courts, pp.310,313,318.
[39] Sharpe, Defamation, p.18-19; Gowing, 'Women', p.93-94.

approach can be enormous.[40] Anthropological research can prompt historians to ask new questions of their sources about the processes of social interaction and the interpretation of behavioural phenomena. In the study of honour, for example, historians have gained a fuller understanding of how honour may be obtained and lost through word of mouth by making comparisons with anthropological studies on gossip and scandal.[41]

If court records are deemed useful historical documents, even though they may be interpreted as 'fictions' which may not guide us to the 'truth', then traditional objections to the use of fictional literature in writing history because it is partial and not factual, also no longer stand.[42] All documents of the past are seen as texts which can only be read subjectively. Furthermore, the last ten years has seen the development of 'new historicism', defined by Richard Wilson as "the return of history in literary criticism".[43] Many new historicists have insisted that instead of seeing literary sources as mere reflectors or interpreters of reality, literature itself is part of history. This approach accords literature power, for as Jean Howard has explained, "rather than passively reflecting an external reality, literature is an agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality." [44] Contemporaries in the seventeenth century knew that literature had the

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[40] For suggestions of the cautions that historians should take when reading and applying anthropological work see, N.Z. Davis, 'Anthropology and History in the 1980s', in T.K. Rabb and R.I. Rotberg, The New History : The 1980s had Beyond (Princeton,1982), p.267-275; Cohen, 'Honour and Gender', pp.598-600,618; and Nye, Maculinity, p.10.

[41] See for example, Sharpe, Defamation, p.19-21; for a full discussion of gossip see below p.38-48.

[42] For a summary of the objections made by some historians about the use of fiction see C. Hill, 'Literature and the English Revolution', The Seventeenth Century, 1, (1986), p.15.

[43] R. Wilson, 'Introduction: Historicising New Historicism', in R.Wilson and R.Dutton (eds), New Historicism and Renaissance Drama (London,1992), p.1.

[44] J.E. Howard, 'The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies', in Wilson and Dutton (eds), New Historicism, p.28-29.

power to construct ideas and influence behaviour. The playwright Thomas Heywood defended his art by arguing that plays with a moral subject were written "to persuade men to humanity and good life, to instruct them in civility and good manners, showing them the fruits of honesty, and the end of villainy".[45] It is the contention of this thesis that history and literature cannot be seen as binary opposites, rather each creates the other.

So we need to consider at the outset the social context of the literary sources used in this thesis. What was the social and gender composition of London theatre audiences? To a certain extent the nature of the audience depended on the type of theatre in which the play was performed. Amphitheatres, for example the Swan and the Globe which were opened from 1567 were open air theatres which offered standing room around the stage in the 'yard', and seating in the galleries for a total of some 3,000 people. In contrast, the indoor hall playhouses, such as Blackfriars and the Cockpit were built in the early seventeenth century to accommodate only about 750 people.[46] The minimum price of admission to the hall playhouses in 1596 was six pence, compared with one penny for entrance to an amphitheatre. The cheapest seat in a hall playhouse could buy the best seat in an amphitheatre, a fact that must have discouraged those on minimal or no income to only patronize the amphitheatres.[47] An observer in the 1590's, when only amphitheatres were open, noted the social diversity of a crowd leaving a theatre,

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[45] T. Heywood, An Apology for Actors (London,1612), sig.,F3-4, as cited in M.J. Johnson, Images of Women in the Works of Thomas Heywood (Salzburg,1974), p.161.

[46] A. Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare's London (Cambridge,1991), p.13-22; R.A. Foakes, 'Playhouses and players' in A.R. Braunmuller and M. Hattaway (eds), The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama (Cambridge,1990), p.1-52.

[47] Gurr, Playgoing, pp.4-5,26-27,75.

> For as we see at all the play house doors,
> When ended is the play, the dance, and song:
> A thousand townsmen, gentlemen, and whores,
> Porters and serving-men together throng. [48]

There is much evidence to suggest that although the hall houses may have attracted a greater proportion of audience from the middling to upper strata of society, theatre audiences remained socially heterogeneous groups. Ben Johnson noted "sinful sixpenny mechanics" in the audience of hall houses in the 1630's, the gentry were known to patronize both amphitheatres and hall houses, and acting companies such as the King's men continued to play the same repertoire at both types of theatre.[49]

In 1660 English theatres were reopened after the civil war. Charles II's active interest and patronage of the theatre, and his friendship with many of its playwrights such as John Dryden, George Etherege and William Wycherley, has led academics to consider how far theatre audiences became dominated by the court elite, and plays came to be written solely to please this aristocratic audience. Certainly, it would appear from the comments of diarists such as Pepys that the aristocrats who went to the theatre were a highly visible clientele, but numerically they were probably never in the majority since the new theatres which were built, such as Drury Lane, seated between five hundred to one thousand people.[50] In The Young Gallant's Academy (1674) it was remarked that, "the Playhouse is free for entertainment, allowing Room as well to the Farmer's Son as to a Templer".[51] By the 1690's the theatre was again under attack from the moralists,

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[48] Sir John Davies, Epigrammes (c.1593),p.17, as cited in Gurr, Playgoing, p.66.
[49] Foakes, 'Playhouses and players', in Braunmuller and Hattaway (eds), The Cambridge Companion, p.37.
[50] R.W. Bevis, English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660-1789 (London,1988), p.31-36; A.H. Scouten and R.D. Hume, "Restoration Comedy' and its Audiences,1660-1776', in R.D. Hume (ed.), The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama 1660-1800 (Carbondale,Illinois,1983), p.46-56.
[51] As cited in Bevis, English Drama, p.32.

and under William and Mary court support for the theatre dwindled.[52] From evidence based on the physical size and structure of theatres, and the collection of anecdotal comments that contemporaries made probably all we can conclude is that whilst the audience of theatres remained socially heterogeneous throughout the seventeenth century, the overall social profile of Restoration audiences was less varied, and more aristocratic than before the civil war.

Women were regular theatre goers throughout the period. Their social status ranged from vagrants and whores, through to Queen Henrietta Maria and the ladies of the court. As with another site of public entertainment, the alehouse, the presence of professional whores in and around the theatres meant that respectable married women did not attend the theatre alone.[53] Samuel Rowlands, who frequently went to plays himself, listed drinking at alehouses and theatre going together when he wrote that a virtuous wife,

> At public plays she never will be known,
> And to be tavern guest she ever hates.[54]

As members of a theatre audience women subverted their traditional gender roles. For as Jean Howard has explained, by going to the theatre a wife moved from her subordinate position in the household and became "part of public urban life as

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[52] E. Howe, The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700 (Cambridge,1992), p.6-7.
[53] Gurr, Playgoing, pp.6-9,56-59,63; this point is strongly disputed in D. Roberts, The Ladies: Female Patronage of Restoration Drama 1660-1700 (Oxford,1989), chapter 3, especially p.94.
[54] S. Rowlands, The Bride (London,1617), sig.,E.

spectator, consumer, and judge".[55] Even when attended by her husband, a woman at a theatre was open to sexual proposition from other playgoers and even the actors themselves. When the jealous husband Pinchwife takes his wife to the theatre in William Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675) he seats her with him in the middle gallery to try and prevent her from being seen by the gallants in the pits and boxes. His wife recalls with sadness that,

> we sat amongst ugly people. He would not let
> me come near the gentry, who sat under us, so that I
> could not see 'em. He told me none but naughty
> women sat there, whom they toused and moused.

Despite his attempts, his wife is overwhelmed by the good looks of the actors, and is herself spotted by the notorious rake Horner, leaving Pinchwife to resolve, "she shall never go to a play again."[56]

Whilst Pinchwife would have shared the stage with female actresses, the actors of pre-civil war theatre were all male. The arrival of actresses on the stage from 1660 has been recently studied by Elizabeth Howe. Giving women a voice in such a public arena would have been deeply threatening to the gender order if playwrights had not given actresses female roles which reinforced traditional images of womanhood - the virgin maid in search of marriage, the chaste wife guarding her husband's honour, and so on. An actress was also regarded and treated as a whore, for "as a sexual object she was no danger to the patriarchal system, but rather its toy."[57] Whilst the majority

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[55] J.E. Howard, 'Women as Spectators, Spectacles and Paying Customers', in D.S. Kastan and P. Stallybrass (eds.), Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (London,1991), p.73.
[56] W. Wycherley, The Country Wife (1675), I,i,468-505; II,i,13-129.
[57] Howe, The First English Actresses, pp.32-36,171-177.

of playwrights and their patrons continued to be male, women's status on the stage remained poor, and their representation was shaped by male perceptions and prescriptions. As this thesis will attempt to show, the result is that from seventeenth century drama we learn much about male honour, and of what men thought female honour should consist.

But what do we know about how contemporaries, male and female, reacted to the plays that were performed ? We have to be cautious in our use of written texts, for today we are left with texts of plays which were designed for oral and visual performance. As Michael Hattaway has explained, "the act of translation from text to performance...could well have been an act of transformation."[58] Furthermore, once the manuscript of a play was sold to a publisher he was free to make minor alterations as he saw fit. In other words, what we study today may well differ from the text of the play that was originally performed.[59] We do have some contemporary accounts by diarists such as Pepys about the experience of playgoing. But as Gurr's study of pre-Restoration evidence has shown, writers usually followed a conventional pattern of briefly describing the plots of the plays, with little or no comment on what reaction this plot provoked for the writer or other members of the audience.[60] Whereas at the theatre the audience may have acted collectively, clapping and applauding or jeering and hissing, it is likely that within that audience there would have been many different individual interpretations of each play which was performed. Different interpretations of the same performance may have depended upon class, gender, marital status, education, and so on, with each individual 'appropriating' from the performance

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[58] M. Hattaway, 'Drama and society' in Braunmuller and Hattaway (eds), The Cambridge Companion, p.94.
[59] S. Orgel, 'What is a Text?', in Kastan and Stallybrass (eds), Staging the Renaissance, p.83-87.
[60] Gurr, Playgoing, p.105-114.

according to his or her needs.[61] We do know that for many members of the audience playgoing was concerned with far more than simply watching a play. Audiences were rarely quiet during a performance, but instead exchanged the latest gossip, argued and even occasionally fought duels. Pepys "lost the pleasure of the play wholly" when "two talking ladies and Sir Ch. Sidly" talked all through a play.[62] Playgoing was a social occasion which provided opportunity for ostentatious show and defence of honour, in addition to any discussion of the matter on the stage. Audience reactions to individual performances are difficult to assess, but what is undeniable is that sexual honour was an extremely popular theme for both drama and ballads. Barber found over two hundred plays written between 1591 and 1700 which mentioned honour; just a brief survey of the plays over the period reminds us how crucial the subject of honour was to their content.[63] William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597) is the humorous story of Ford's attempts to protect his sexual honour; Othello (c.1604) is so wracked with jealousy that he kills his wife whom he believes has cuckolded him; Bassanes in John Ford's The Broken Heart (c.1629) is another jealous husband who tries to imprison his wife in their house to protect his honour; as is Pinchwife in William Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675), and the drunken Sir John Brute in John Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife (1697). Twenty plays from the seventeenth century were studied in depth for this thesis.[64]

There were so many ballads written about men who had lost their honour in the seventeenth century that when Pepys came to organise his collection of them he

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[61] R. Chartier, The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France (trans.,Princeton,1987); for an excellent case study of the appropriation of texts see, C. Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller (trans., London,1980).

[62] As cited in Howe, The first English actress, p.7.

[63] Barber, The Idea of Honour.

[64] For a list of plays consulted see Bibliography.

entitled one large group of ballads "Marriage, Cuckoldry etc." Playwrights and ballad writers and sellers had a market to attract and please, and the most obvious way to achieve this would have been to write about issues which were of current interest and import. It is argued in this thesis that sexual honour was a matter of considerable concern and worry to many men. So plays and popular ballads portrayed in exaggerated form the dilemmas and crises that many men either experienced or feared whilst attempting to maintain their sexual honour. These were fears which in reality many men felt they were not free to express. Without the study of fictional sources this dimension of the study of male honour would be lost. Along with other literary genres such as conduct books, jest books and satire, ballads and drama were frequently didactic in form, which may suggest that some contemporaries, whether they gave it conscious thought or not, in fact sought advice about sexual honour when they listened and watched. Evidence suggests that early modern audiences had advanced listening skills which enabled them to recall passages of plays and remember the words and tunes of long ballads. These skills were encouraged by the practice of rote learning in elementary schools, and were fostered by the presence of a strong tradition of oral culture.[65] It is likely that these skills enabled some men to remember what they have seen and heard, in order to apply it to their own lives.

From the study of broadside ballads we can discover the meaning of male honour within the mental world of the lower and middling orders in seventeenth century England. One hundred and thirty-eight ballads have been studied for this thesis from the Pepys, Roxburghe, Euing and Shirburn collections. This number of ballads represents a significant proportion of ballads concerning marriage which survive as

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[65] Gurr, Playgoing, p.80-81; M.C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge,1980), p.72-73.

many of the same ballads are reprinted in these collections.[66] Ballads were printed in gothic script on a broadside, or a single sheet of flimsy paper with printing on one side only. The price of a ballad ranged between half a penny and a penny, the cost of half a loaf of bread, a pot of ale, or a standing place to view a play in an amphitheatre.[67] They were written by men who were either professional ballad authors such as Martin Parker and Thomas Deloney, or by occasional writers with an eye for a good story. Few biographical details are known about these writers, other than that ballad writing was not regarded as a highly profitable trade.[68] Ballads were distributed in rural areas by country chapmen, and by specialist ballad sellers on street corners, marketplaces and in alehouses of urban centres. Pedlars such as Shakespeare's Autolycus were familiar figures in early modern England, and often also carried ballads within their stock-in-trade.[69] The successful sale of a ballad depended to a great extent on the performance of the ballad seller who acted as a showman singing the ballad to one of

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[66] For full bibliographical references, abbreviations used in this thesis, and dating of ballads see Preface, p.v, and Abbreviations, p. vi.

[67] T. Watt, Cheap Print and Popular Piety,1550-1640 (Cambridge,1991), p.11-12; N. Wurzbach, The Rise of the English Street Ballad 1550-1650 (Cambridge,1990), p.20; J. Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany (Charlottesville,1992), p.30; for ballads which state that they cost one penny see for example, 'A Groatsworth of Good Counsel', Roxburghe, vol.VI, part III, p.480-481; and 'Half a dozen of good Wives: All for a penny', Roxburghe, (1634), vol.I, p.451-456; for general surveys on ballad literature see also, L. Shepard, The Broadside Ballad: A Study of Origins and Meaning (London,1962), and The History of Street Literature (Newton Abbot,1973).

[68] Wurzbach, The Rise of the English Street Ballad, p.21-23; B. Capp, 'Popular literature', in B. Reay (ed.), Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England (London,1985), p.199-200.

[69] W. Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale (c.1609), IV,iii-iv; M. Spufford, The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century (London,1984),pp.85-89; for portrayals of pedlars within the ballads see, 'The Sorrowful Lamentation of the Pedlars and Chapmen', Roxburghe, (1685-6), vol.VII, part I, p.46-47; 'The Jovial Pedlar', Roxburghe, vol.VII, part I, p.49-51; 'The Proud Pedlar', Roxburghe, (1682-1688), vol.VII, part I, p.51-52.

some 1,000 popular tunes.[70] In contrast to theatre audiences, this method of sale, and the relatively cheap price of ballads made them a form of culture which was accessible to a socially and geographically diverse audience. A network of ballad sellers who travelled from the publishers in London reached areas as wide apart as York, Berwick, Preston, and Carlisle, establishing between them a national market for this form of cheap print.[71] When an Act was passed in 1696-7 to license all hawkers, pedlars and chapmen travelling on foot, over 2,500 of them licensed within the first year from all over the country.[72] The numbers of ballads produced was enormous; as well as the thousands of ballads which were printed by unlicensed presses, we know of 3,000 titles which were registered with the Stationer's Company between 1557 and 1709.[73] Tessa Watt has estimated that there may have been a total number of three to four million copies of ballads in circulation in the second half of the sixteenth century.[74]

In 1595 Nicholas Bownde commented on the audience of ballads, and wrote that,

> In the shops of Artificers, and cottages of poor husbandmen... you shall sooner see one of these new Ballads, which are made only to keep them occupied...then any of the Psalms, and may perceive them to be cunninger in singing the one, then the other.[75]

Some fifty years later Izaak Walton referred to,

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[70] Wurzbach, The Rise of the English Street Ballad, p.13-17; Watt, Cheap Print, pp.23-25,33-37.
[71] Watt, Cheap Print, pp.6,27-29.
[72] M. Spufford, Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England (London,1981), p.116-121.
[73] V.E. Neuburg, Popular Literature: A History and a Guide (Harmondsworth,1977), p.62.
[74] Watt, Cheap Print, pp.11,42.
[75] N. Bownde, The Doctrine of the Sabbath (London,1595), p.242, as cited in Spufford, Small Books, p.10-11.

> An honest ale-house where we shall find a cleanly room,
> lavender in the windows, and twenty ballads stuck about the wall.[76]

How many of the occupants of these cottages and alehouses would have been able to read these ballads? David Cressy has examined evidence from those who could sign their names in this period and has concluded that roughly 30% of men in rural England could sign their names by the 1640's, with a slightly higher percentage in London. In all the geographical areas which Cressy studied, the literacy of women lagged behind that of men.[77] But Margaret Spufford has shown that reading was a skill that was taught and learnt in elementary schools before writing. A child could be taught to read within the first year of his schooling before the age of six or seven when he might have to join the family workforce.[78] So it is likely that ballads were within the reading skills of considerable numbers of husbandmen and labourers. But for every ballad sold, far larger numbers of people were likely to hear its message because ballads were designed primarily to be sung, not read. As Christopher Marsh has recognised in his recent production of audio tapes featuring the performance of seventeenth century ballads, the music of these ballads could powerfully convey aural messages.[79] Furthermore, most ballads also featured a woodcut picture, which must have also aided comprehensibility to the non-literate or semi-literate. So as Marsh has argued, a distinction must be drawn between the market of ballads, and the audience for ballads. Literacy was "a supplementary form of access rather than a vital password without which the door to print remained firmly closed."[80] Hence women, as the most illiterate

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[76] I. Walton, The Complete Angler (London,1653-55), as cited in Wurzbach, The Rise of the English Street Ballad, p.279.
[77] D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge,1980), pp.72,128-9.
[78] M. Spufford, 'First steps in literacy: the reading and writing experiences of the humblest seventeenth-century autobiographers', Social History, vol.4, no.3, (1979), p.407-435; Spufford, Small Books, p.19-33.
[79] C. Marsh, Songs of the Seventeenth Century (Belfast,1994), p.41-48.
[80] Marsh, Songs, pp.8-9,25,27; Watt, Cheap Print, p.131-177.

group within this society, could be heard singing ballads by Dorothy Osborne, wife of Sir William Temple, when she walked on a common in 1653, "where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows and sit in the shade singing of ballads."[81]

There is also evidence that ballads were enjoyed by those from the upper echelons of early modern society. Some ballads were directed to those of high social status, for example the ballad entitled, 'A Lanthorne for Landlords'.[82] There is evidence that chapbooks (cheap books produced by folding broadsides into pages) were often the childhood reading of the social elite, and it seems likely that ballads may also have served this purpose.[83] Adults from the upper sorts also purchased and read or sang ballads. This type of literature was not always used with respect; Sir William Cornwallis kept "pamphlets and lying-stories and two-penny poets" in his privy to be first read there, and then used. The ideas of ballads were clearly not restricted to the lower sorts.[84] We have the wealthier members of seventeenth century communities to thank for the survival of many ballads today, since it was men such as Pepys who collected and saved the ballads of his time.

Audiences of ballads and plays in the seventeenth century cannot be polarised into elite and non-elite groups; the presence of the lower sorts in theatres, and the evidence for elite participation in ballad culture must show us that social groups shared many values attitudes, and beliefs. Nevertheless, ballads can be said to represent 'popular' culture as their authors, distributors and audiences were mainly non elite; compared with theatre audiences in which the elite were a more visible presence, especially after the Restoration. As this thesis will demonstrate, however, repeated story lines featuring

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[81] K. Parker (ed.), Letters to Sir William Temple (London,1987), p.89.
[82] As cited in Marsh, Songs, p.21.
[83] Spufford, Small Books, p.72-74.
[84] Ibid., p.48-49.

the fate of cuckolded or jealous husbands in both genres ensured that all social groups had a common understanding of what constituted male sexual honour. Rather than witnessing an increasing divergence of cultures into elite and non elite, it will be argued that the seventeenth century saw social classes united in their desire to gain and protect sexual honour.[85]

Each of the sources considered in this thesis: Durham church court defamation cases from the early seventeenth century, court of Arches marriage separation cases from the Restoration period, ballads, and plays, has its own particular methodological problems for the historian. But if we consider how all these records were produced, and maintain an awareness of the differences between them, then new interpretations of honour from various class and gender perspectives will emerge. The following chapters will seek to address a number of issues about male honour. They will ask to what extent it was a value system which varied in definition according to social class. The ways in which honour was established, maintained and contested will be examined. This will lead to an examination of questions about how honour was defined by contemporaries, and what purpose they believed a social system based on notions of honour would serve. The consequences for individuals who failed to maintain honour will be considered, and the options open to men for defending their honour, and responding to dishonour will be studied. An understanding of honour, it will be argued, is vital if we are to explore more deeply the gender relations of

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[85] For the debate over the polarisation of culture into between non elite and elite, and discussion over the meaning of popular culture see, P.Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (London,1978), and his 'Introduction to the revised reprint' (Aldershot,1994), xiv-xxvii; T. Harris, 'Problematising Popular Culture', in T. Harris (ed.), Popular Culture in England,c.1500-1850 (London,1995), p.1-27; M. Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and the "Reform of Popular Culture in Early Modern England', Past and Present, no.105 (1984), p.79-113; and Marsh, Songs, p.30-38.

seventeenth century England, for it was a concept which governed men's thinking, emotions and actions.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PATTERN AND CONTEXT OF MALE HONOUR

In the seventeenth century a man's honour was multifaceted, consisting of both sexual and non-sexual components. This chapter will show how ideas of what constituted honour changed over time, and will highlight the range or types of behaviour that a man would need to adopt to be considered honourable. It examines how notions of male honour were negotiated and challenged, and how far these ideas about honour differed between social classes.

2.1 The Gentry and Honour

It has been argued that the gentry perceived and understood honour very differently from other social groups. Indeed, it has even been stated that, "The gentry's code of honour...set them apart from other men" and that honour "is a matter for the upper classes; ordinary people have no pretence to it, and can't afford such a luxury".[1] Mervyn James' study of gentry honour has shown that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries honour was not regarded as an individual possession, but as belonging to the collective entity of the family. James has argued that an affront to one member of a family was seen as an insult and challenge to the honour of the whole household. Within the gentry honour descended through lineage from one generation to the next. As male honour was inherited by blood, and concerned with public or political behaviour, it was unaffected by the private or sexual roles which men chose to adopt.[2]

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[1] A.J. Fletcher, 'Honour, Reputation and Local Officeholding in Elizabethan and Stuart England', in A.J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds), Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (Cambridge,1987), p.115; Barber, The Idea of Honour, pp.105,30; see also, R. Kelso, The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century (Gloucester,Mass,1964), p.96-105.

[2] James, English Politics and the Concept of Honour; M. James, Family, Lineage and Civil Society: A Study of Society, Politics and Mentality in the Durham Region 1500-1640 (Oxford,1974), p.177-194.

Treatises addressed to the nobility and aristocracy concerning honour were written throughout the seventeenth century, from Robert Ashley's Of Honour written between 1596-1603, to J. Gailhard's The Compleat Gentleman of 1678. The ideas about honour in these tracts were derived from the Christian tradition and from classical sources by writers such as Aristotle and Cicero. A number of works concerning honour were also translations of foreign texts. A.C. Bryson argues that the influence of these continental works on honour on English ideas of honour should not be underestimated.[3] The authors of these tracts never dispute the importance of a man having honour; it is to be "more desired than life", and preferred "above all other good things".[4] Many writers cite the proverb "A good Name is to be chosen above great Riches".[5] The need for honour has become so fundamental to men of this social group that it is argued that men seek honour and shun shame from natural instinct.[6]

That the gentry continued to take pride in their lineage throughout the seventeenth century is shown by the wealth of visual evidence which remains in today's churches.[7] Eulogies on church monuments and family chapels testify to the collective honour of ancient families. In gentry houses examples survive of armorial glass, and of paintings that demonstrate the importance of lineage to these families. Sir John Ferrers painted his parlour at Tamworth Castle with shields to show his pedigree, which he dated back

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[3] See for example, A. Courtin, The Rules of Civility (London,1671), and Count H. Romei, The Courtiers Academie (London,1598); A.C. Bryson, 'Concepts of Civility in England c.1560-1685' (University of Oxford D.Phil,1984), p.249-250.
[4] Markham, The Booke of Honour, p.1; R. Ashley, Of Honour (ed.),V.B. Heltzel (San Marino,California,1947), p.24.
[5] Proverbs 22:1; for example see C. Gibbon, The Praise of a Good Name (London,1594), p.4.
[6] Ashley, Of Honour, p.40; Gibbon, The Praise, sig.,B2.
[7] Esdaile, English Church Monuments; Llewellyn, The Art of Death.

to the Norman Conquest.[8] We also have evidence of gentry interest in lineage from their attempts to trace their ancestry. Sir Richard Grosvenor, for example, employed a local antiquary to investigate his family's history.[9] Some families were even prepared to invent genealogies to win honour. The Wellesbourne family of Hughenden, Buckinghamshire who were descended from a Wycombe clothier, tried to substantiate their claims that their line actually originated from Wellesbourne de Montfort, illegitimate brother of Earl Simon, by forging medieval seals, carving their coat of arms on a genuine fourteenth century tomb in their local church, and by constructing a series of effigies of their thirteenth and fifteenth century ancestors.[10] That gentlemen saw honour as status accrued beyond the immediate household is shown by evidence that kinship ties continued to have practical importance for many gentry households. P. Clark has argued that in Kent kinship was an "important ingredient in the complex web of a gentleman's reputation", and A. Everitt has substantiated the same point. Blood ties held special duties and loyalties and could provide social and political opportunities for the gentry.[11]

The concept of honour also remained a useful political tool for the gentry to enforce and explain the social order. It was the gentry who had the power to bestow honours as rewards on others, and they themselves could owe their positions to the crown. Some treatises described society as a hierarchy of honour with the crown and the gentry at its top. Social groups of inferior status were expected to honour those above

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[8] F. Heal and C. Holmes, The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700 (London,1994), p.35.
[9] R. Cust and P. Lake, 'Sir Richard Grosvenor and the Rhetoric of Magistracy',Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 54, (1981), p.52.
[10] Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, p.34.
[11] P. Clark, English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution (Sussex,1977), p.124-125; A. Everitt, The Community of Kent and The Great Rebellion 1640-1660 (Leicester,1966), p.33-35; A. Fletcher A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660 (London,1975), p.44-53; D. Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', Past and Present, no.113 (1986),p.49.

them. In this way honour was essentially anti-egalitarian and could be used to justify social difference. As Ashley explained, "for the dignity and order of the Common wealth there ought to be degrees of Honour, Lest the Common people and the nobility, private men and magistrates...a King and a Captain should be all of one Accompt."[12] Writers of these tracts conveniently ignored the competitiveness which could ensue between men in the fight for honour, and instead wrote of how honour acted as a motivator to inspire men to perform good deeds.[13]

But the concept of gentry honour was subject to change. James argues that over the period 1485-1642 state involvement in traditional gentry politics, and social and religious change had a profound effect upon notions of honour. In particular, honour came to be regarded as a reward for individual virtue as well as, or increasingly rather than, an attribute gained through lineage. Writers of conduct books for gentlemen, influenced by the ideas of humanists and puritans, argued that honour could be claimed by either blood or birth; or virtue or quality; or blood and virtue. It was men who fell into the third category, blood and virtue, who were owed the most honour, and those in the first the least.[14] The relative importance of virtue over lineage was expressed with greater clarity as the seventeenth century progressed. In The Praise of a Good Name (1594) Charles Gibbon asserted that "It is not the Name, but the qualities, not dignity or descent, but the disposition and good demeanour, that makes any renowned

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[12] Ashley, Of Honour, p.70; see also G. Markham, Honour in his Perfection (London.1624), p.4 for a similar argument; see Campbell, Honour, Family and Patronage, p.264-268, and J. Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status in Andalusia', in J.G. Peristiany, (ed.), Honour and Shame (London,1965), p.23-73 for anthropological observations on the hierarchy of honour.

[13] See for example, D. Tuvill, Essaies Politicke, and Morall (London,1608), f.119r.

[14] W. Segar, Honor Military, and Civill (London,1602), p.113; Markham, The Booke of Honour, p.41-53; Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, pp.9,17-19,30-31; for the influence of sixteenth century humanist ideas on gentry notions of honour see, J.P. Cooper, 'Ideas of Gentility in Early Modern England', in G.E. Aylmer and J.S. Morrill (eds), Land, Men and Beliefs: Studies in Early Modern History (Oxford,1983), p.43-77.

and famous."[15] Richard Braithwait wrote in 1630 that, "Virtue the greatest Signal and Symbol of Gentry: is rather expressed by goodness of Person, than greatness of Place". By the time Gailhard wrote his treatise in 1678, it was conduct and good breeding which made a man honourable; "He who is but a Countryman, and lives well as such, seems to me more commendable, than he who is a Gentleman born, and doth not the actions of a Gentleman".[16] That these ideas were having an effect may be seen by the gentry's loss of interest in gaining formal recognition of their status from heralds' visitations after 1660, and in the changes in memorial architecture. Wall tablets with portraits of busts as memorials to individuals became a more frequent sight in churches than the family tomb with effigies of children along the sides emphasizing pedigree and lineage.[17]

But which actions did writers of conduct books for gentlemen consider to be virtuous? What roles did men need to adopt to deserve honour? Displaying physical courage and strength were important ways of gaining honour. Honour could be won and lost on the battlefield. Tracts such as George Whetstone's The Honorable Reputation of a Souldier (1585) emphasised that honour won by military pursuit endured well beyond a man's lifetime,

> Long lives the man, that dies in lusty years,
> In actions where honour may arise.[18]

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[15] Gibbon, The Praise, p.16.
[16] R. Braithwait, The English Gentleman (London,1630), dedicatory; J. Gailhard, The Compleat Gentleman (London,1678), Part I, 'To the Reader', see also, Part II, p.110; see also, Ashley, Of Honour, p.34; and Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour, pp.3,67.
[17] Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, p.38-39.
[18] G. Whetstone, The Honorable Reputation of a Souldier (London,1585),sig.,Aiii.

Over the period there were changes in attitude to how military honour could be won. Whereas early works such as William Segar's Honour Military, and Civil (1602) concentrates on the more traditional and chivalric codes of knightly behaviour, later tracts emphasise how military virtue and honour could be obtained by service to the state rather than by fighting private feuds between kin groups.[19] These tracts support James' thesis which argues that society changed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries from one that was characterised by tension and conflict between gentry families, to one that was "civil" and "ordered".[20]

Martial skills were not the only way that a gentleman could show physical strength and courage and so earn honour. Gailhard as a tutor to young gentlemen had learnt that hunting was an exercise which made men "strong and lusty". Roger Manning has argued that hunting "came to be viewed as a more chivalrous alternative to sixteenth-century land warfare", increasing in popularity during the relatively peaceful years of the early Stuart period. For many young men its rigours and tests of bravery represented an adolescent rite of passage. Gailhard also recommended horsemanship as a "very manly thing", as well as running, wrestling and leaping. Such sports were extolled for their hardship, and participation was recommended to men who wished to avoid the charge of an over tender or "effeminate" education.[21]

If honour did not necessarily come to a man by right of descent, then he had to learn the virtues pertaining to honour through education and breeding. In other words, as

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[19] See for example, Markham, Honour in his Perfection.

[20] James, English Politics; and Family, Lineage and Civil Society, especially p.177-194.

[21] Gailhard, The Compleat Gentleman, Part I, pp.79,85; Part II, p.50-51; R. Manning, Hunters and Poachers (Oxford,1993), pp.4-17,35-37; see also, M. Vale, The Gentleman's Recreations: Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentleman 1580-1630 (Cambridge,1977); for effeminacy see below p.65-68.

honour came to be obtained by nurture not nature, intensive gender training was required for the sons of the gentry. Books of advice for young men gave instructions on suitable conduct for every detail of daily life from rules of speech and dress to table manners and letter writing. "Let thy whole carriage, thy very thoughts and desires, be suitable to thy condition, for fear of bringing thy self into danger, harm, shame, and infamy" Gailhard advised.[22]

In the grammar schools which most sons attended, boys learnt that it was the Christian virtues of piety and charity which would earn them nobility. Erasmus' teaching on the virtues of Christian belief became a grammar school commonplace; "Let it not move thee one whit when thou hearest the wise men of this world...so earnestly disputing of the degrees of the genealogy or lineage...thou, laughing at the error of these men...shall count...that the only most perfect nobleness is to be regenerate in Christ."[23]

When these boys entered adulthood they were expected to demonstrate the Christian virtues they had learnt in their households. As Charles Gibbon wrote, "It is not the glorious show of the house, but the godly actions of the owner that makes him renowned."[24] Being a godly household head involved responsibility for the moral conduct of the family and servants. It also involved showing hospitality to neighbouring gentry families and giving charity to the poor. Felicity Heal explains that honour and reputation in this period were "attached to good lordship, generosity and the appearance of an open household".[25] Hospitality allowed the gentry to display their honour to others, as the household provided the ideal forum for a show of

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[22] Gailhard, The Compleat Gentleman, Part I, p.58; see also, Courtin, The Rules of Civility; for advice on letter writing see, A. Day, The English Secretorie, (London,1595).
[23] Erasmus, Enchiridion Militis Christiani, as cited in James, Family, Lineage, p.101.
[24] Gibbon, The Praise, p.23.
[25] F.Heal, Hospitality in Early Modern England (Oxford,1990), p.13; for a fuller discussion of these issues see below pp.157-158,173-177.

wealth, lineage, and generosity. Sir John Strode urged other gentry "let thy doors be (at all seasonable times) open to thy kindred and friends".[26]

The gentry also saw public office as a means to gain honour. Segar's tract described duty in civil government as the alternative to military service as the means to gain honour.[27] Anthony Fletcher has shown that for many JPs "prestige not wealth was the principal reward of office". The wrangles and disputes that occurred in the localities on the bench as gentry sought, and sometimes fought for positions reflect the importance of gaining honour in this way.[28] Election to office became more dependent upon a man's reputation in the community than upon family roots. When Sir Richard Grosvenor stood for election in 1624 the emphasis of his speech to his Cheshire audience was that he qualified for the post as a godly man, rather than because he came from an ancient lineage.[29] No doubt, many Puritan gentry like Sir Richard saw the exercise of religious virtue as the reason for their elevation to positions of honour, as well as the chief function of their office.[30] The learned philosopher in John Ford's The Broken Heart (c.1629) expressed what many of these gentry must have believed, that "real honour":

> Is the reward of virtue, and acquired
> By justice, or by valour which for basis
> Hath justice to uphold it.[31]

The idea that honour stemmed from virtuous actions never wholly replaced others that laid more emphasis on lineage. After all, for the gentry it would have been too

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[26] As cited in Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, (London,1994), p.288.
[27] Segar, Honor Military,and Civill.
[28] Fletcher, 'Honour' in Fletcher and Stevenson (eds), Order and Disorder.
[29] Cust and Lake, 'Sir Richard Grosvenor', p.51-52; for the importance of godliness and public office to gentry honour see also, Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, p.168-175.
[30] See Fletcher 'Honour', pp.95,104 for other examples of godly magistrates.
[31] J. Ford, The Broken Heart (c.1629), III,i,37-40.

politically subversive to suggest that any man who displayed virtue was worthy of honour.[32] Even those who saw the value of honour arising from virtue could rarely resist the opportunity to display the honour they had gained through inheritance as well. Thomas Lyte of Lytes Cary, Somerset, who was keen to claim that his interests in genealogy did not stem from "any ostentation of birth or kindred", and cited Job on the dangers of worldly ambition, nevertheless wrote two pedigrees of his family and decorated his house and chapel with armorial glass.[33] In St. Albans Abbey there is a monument to three members of the Maynard family who died between 1547 and 1619. Under the name of John Maynard is a eulogy which claims his honour from both lineage and virtue,

> A Gentleman of Ancient Name,
> Who had a Wife a virtuous dame
> They lived together in Godly Sort
> Forty five years with Good Report.[34]

Richard Cust has shown in his study of the early Stuart Star Chamber libel suit fought between Sir Thomas Beaumont and Sir Henry Hastings that the gentry continued to employ a variety of different discourses to describe their honour. The choice of discourse could vary according to individual circumstance. Beaumont used a language of honour which emphasized his reputation for godliness and public service, which obviously Hastings as a Catholic could not match. Instead, Hastings in his defence stressed his lineage and loyalty to the king.[35]

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[32] For a discussion of this idea see W. Hunt, 'Civic Chivalry and the English Civil War', in A. Grafton and A. Blair (eds), The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe (Philadelphia,1990), p.204-310.
[33] Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, p.32.
[34] St.Albans Abbey, Hertfordshire.
[35] R. Cust, 'Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: The Case of Beaumont v. Hastings', Past and Present, 149, (1995), p.70-81.

Clearly there were many different strands to the concept of male honour. But crucially, the inclusion of ideas concerning the importance of individual virtue within gentry understandings of honour, allowed honour to become a concept which had shared meanings across all social groups. For all men could exhibit virtue through sexual behaviour and control. The remainder of this thesis will be concerned not with a study of the scholarly texts for the literate few, but with looking at the ideas about sexual honour found in ballads and drama which were enjoyed by, and were widely available to men across a wide social spectrum. These forms of culture were most influential in determining what men saw as honourable and dishonourable behaviour. An examination of court records will then reveal how within this cultural context, ideas were translated into patterns of behaviour.

2.2 Gossip

A man's honour, regardless of his social class, depended upon the opinion of others. In the close knit village societies of the seventeenth century a man's behaviour was under the constant scrutiny of his neighbours. Within gentry families the design and layout of houses still gave limited consideration to privacy, and little went unobserved by servants. Within this context, this section examines how popular literature helped to create and in turn reinforce firstly, a stereotypical image of those who judged male reputation and secondly, a concept of what aspects of male reputation were held to be most important and thus worthy of comment.

Church court records confirm that in this period talking about the details of other people's lives was a popular pastime. People talked in kitchens, on doorsteps and in back yards, in market places and in alehouses about those they knew. Anthropologists and linguists who have studied small village societies and the dynamics of group

interaction have taught us much about the way that gossip operates. Gossip is a means of informal communication and a way of gathering information about people and their involvement in events in a community.[36] The subject of gossip may originate with an observed event or with a person revealing a 'secret' part of themselves to another. The 'story' is then passed down a chain, each narrator typically telling the story in a slightly different way. The enjoyment of this type of talk is derived from the belief that the knowledge gained is intimate to its subject and that the information is not shared by the wider community. Arguably, those who participate in the same line of gossip are united and bound together as a group.[37] Revealing details about oneself and sharing the 'secrets' of others has been observed to be an important way of gaining friendship, and a sign of trust and intimacy.[38]

However, within seventeenth century popular culture this type of talk only had negative connotations. It was associated wholly with women; the word 'gossip' was derived from the women who would be invited to witness the birth of a child.[39] In popular literature the gossip is always portrayed as female. In Samuel Rowland's merry books gossips are women of different ages who gather to drink and gossip in taverns, and in ballads gossip is portrayed as a favourite female occupation.[40] Most

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[36] This definition is taken from R. Paine, 'What is gossip about? An alternative hypothesis', Man, new ser.2, (1967), p.278-285. The article is in reply to a key anthropological article on gossip, M. Gluckman, 'Gossip and Scandal', Current Anthropology, vol.4,no.3, (1963), p.307-316; see also, Bailey (ed.), Gifts and Poison; R.L. Rosnow and G.A. Fine, Rumor and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay (Oxford, 1976); S.E. Merry, 'Rethinking Gossip and Scandal', in D. Black (ed.), Toward a General Theory of Social Control (London,1984), p.271-296; for a survey of the portrayal of gossip in literature see P.M. Spacks, Gossip (Chicago,1985).

[37] This argument is put forward by Gluckman, 'Gossip and Scandal', but strongly contested by Paine, 'What is gossip'.

[38] See the useful chapter on gossip in D. Tannen, You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation (London,1990), p.96-122.

[39] A. Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation', in V. Fildes (ed.), Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England (London,1990), p.71.

[40] S. Rowlands, Well Met Gossip (London,1619), and A Crew of Kind Gossips (London,1613); for examples of ballads see below p.40-41.

significantly, gossip was viewed negatively because of its destructive potential. Men believed that gossip was talk which evaluated the honour worthiness of others. In other words, they believed that when women talked they were not merely gaining information, but were also being critical and judgemental. Gossip became talk not about someone, but against someone. The reputation of scandalmongering was attached to gossips. Furthermore, it was thought that men were the only topic of conversation for gossips. In Well Met Gossip (1619) a maid, wife and widow meet and discuss "whose choice hath got the kindest man." They compare the details of the physical appearance of the men they have known from their hair colour to their beards as well as the advantages and disadvantages of a man having wealth or intelligence.[41] The ironically titled A Crew of Kind Gossips (1613) portrays the talk of six women, each of whom has a separate complaint about their husbands. The author Rowlands warns married men that "Your credits are in question" when gossips critically discuss their behaviour. One of the husbands in the story complains bitterly of his wife and how,

> she lay me open (as in scorne)
> To her companions scoffing at me so. [42]

In one of Rowland's poems a bride warns other women to avoid the company of gossiping wives because the only function of their conversation is to abuse their absent husbands.[43]

This portrayal of women's talk is also found in contemporary ballads. 'Well met Neighbour' is a song in which two women on their way to a childbirth discuss the faults of the husbands in their neighbourhood. They take it in turn to relate news of

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[41] Rowlands, Well Met Gossip.
[42] Rowlands, A Crew of Kind Gossips, sigs., A2,D3.
[43] Rowlands, The Bride,sig., E2.

different men, beginning "Know you not Laurence the miller?", "Know you not Ralph the plummer" and so on. The wives list a variety of faults of the men, one husband beats his wife, another threatens to kill his wife, another keeps wenches. Each wife tries to make her story more shocking than the last. They support each other by their judgements with general exclamations against men such as "O, fye on these dastardly knaves!" and "O such a rogue would be hanged!" They also imagine how they would deal with such dreadful men if they were their wives.[44] The gossips in the 1638 ballad 'The Married Man's Misery' go one step further, using drink to "arm themselves" to cuckold their husbands.[45]

These examples of the portrayal of gossips in popular literature reveal male anxieties about female friendship. Women who talk together are shown comparing the reputations of the men they know and condemning those who do not fit their agreed standards of 'honourable' behaviour. As will be argued in the next chapter, this portrayal of women may have arisen from men's fears about their ability to control and rule their wives. It may also have been a result of men's realization of the vulnerability of their reputations within married life. The husband in the ballad who complains that his gossiping wife 'lays him open' expresses the fear that his wife does not respect his expectations of privacy within marriage and that she exposes what he thought intimate. It may seem to suggest that men thought women had a different understanding to them as to what was private and personal in a relationship, and what details or events concerning their partnership were fit for public consumption.

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[44] 'Well met Neighbour', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.98-103.
[45] 'The Married Man's Misery', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.152; for further discussion of the portrayal of gossips in literature see, J.A. Sharpe, 'Plebeian Marriage in Stuart England: Some Evidence from Popular Literature', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series, 36, (1986), p.80-82; and D. Lindley, The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James (London,1993), p.53-54.

The female gossips in popular literature are threatening because of their power. They have power over men firstly because as wives they have gained access to the most personal knowledge of their husbands' bodies and minds, information which they can choose to 'betray' to others. Secondly, by their criticism they appear to control the way that men behave. In literature gossip certainly appears to have this regulative effect upon men's behaviour. In the ballad of 'John Tomson and Jakaman his Wife' the husband wishes he could return to bachelor life. He says he cannot go anywhere without his wife watching him and if he tries to kiss another woman her friends readily tell him "thy wife shall know of this." He knows that gossip about his illicit behaviour will get back to his wife and he will suffer for it.[46] In Thomas Harman's tale of women gossiping, one wife prevents her husband from committing adultery by gossiping to her friends of her suspicions concerning her husbands' fidelity. Her friends pounce on the husband as he is about to commit adultery, and with his hose down they beat him. Never again, so the story goes, did the husband stray from the marriage bed.[47] Charles Gibbon in his tract about male reputation bemoaned the fact that men's freedom was hindered by fear of gossip. He writes that a man could be the victim of evil gossip simply by visiting a neighbour's house or by talking with a woman "upon such honest intent".[48] Moralists such as the minister Daniel Rogers, writing in 1642, believed that gossip had a positive effect on men's behaviour as it forced them to be faithful to their wives, "fame and report is well called by some, the married ones Saint".[49] This literary evidence suggesting that men did adjust their behaviour to avoid gossip, may seem to

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[46] 'John Tomson and Jakaman his Wife', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.137-142.
[47] T. Harman, A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursitors, Vulgarly called Vagabonds (London,1566), as cited in A.V. Judges, The Elizabethan Underworld (London,1930), p.101-105.
[48] Gibbon, The Praise of Good Name, p.28.
[49] D. Rogers, Matrimoniall Honour (London,1642), p.168.

be in direct contrast with the conclusion reached by Sharpe's study of church court records, that gossip particularly controlled female behaviour.[50]

However, whilst popular literature may have shown the potential of female talk to control male behaviour, we also have strong evidence for male determination not to be ruled by gossip. Firstly, men labelled female talk as worthless, trivial and as "idle talk". They portrayed gossips as "lazy" and as the "idle Crew".[51] Women neglect their household duties by gossiping. In 'Man's Felicity and Misery' two husbands compare their wives. Edmund's wife is careful to fulfil her duties and "never comes abroad", but David's wife is so busy spending time with gossips that his children can spend the whole day undressed.[52] By denying the importance of female talk to reputation, and by diminishing its value, men attempted to negate its power.

Secondly, men attempted to control female talk by labelling persistent gossips as scolds. Scolding was an offence which could be prosecuted in the courts and punished by the cucking stool.[53] The public punishment of scolds must have been a powerful reminder to women of their duty to be guarded in their speech. Steve Hindle's research into the experience of Margaret Knowsley, a maidservant of the Nantwich preacher Stephen Jerome, who in the late 1620's spread gossip that her master had persistently harassed her sexually, eventually attempting rape, has shown the treatment of women who dared to make public male private behaviour. On three market days she was

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[50] Sharpe, Defamation and Sexual Slander, p.20.
[51] 'Advice to Batchelors', Roxburghe,vol.III, p.374; 'The Married-mans best Portion', Pepys,vol.IV, p.84.
[52] M.P.,'Man's Felicity and Misery', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.183-188.
[53] D.E. Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds), Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (Cambridge,1987), p.116-136; M.Ingram, '"Scolding women cucked or washed": a crisis of gender relations in early modern England?', in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds) Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England (London,1994), p.48-80.

whipped through the town, placed in a cage "high in the open market" for two hours bearing papers with the inscription "for unjustly slandering Mr Jerome a preacher of God's word", and then still holding this message, carted through the town.[54] In this period language was power, a point made with crystal clarity in Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew (c.1591), in which Petruchio's taming of Kate is complete once she will say that the sun is the moon.[55] So women learnt that their honour depended upon not talking about the honour of others; virtuous women did not gossip. Men established a close link between female speech and chastity suggesting that unruly speech implied whoredom. Hence conduct book writers such as Barnabe Rich taught that a virtuous woman "openeth her mouth with wisdom", and Barbaro in his treatise On Wifely Duties warned women not to speak in public "for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs."[56] When searching for a suitable wife a man should note the modesty of a woman's speech, Henry Smith warned, "for the ornament of a woman is silence...As the open vessels were counted unclean; so account that the open mouth hath much uncleaness."[57] That such teaching influenced gender training and upbringing is shown by the example of Lady Grace Mildmay who recalled in her autobiography how both her mother and governess had instructed her as a child to always avoid "idle talk", and "ever carry with me a modest

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[54] S. Hindle, 'The shaming of Margaret Knowsley: gossip, gender and the experience of authority in early modern England', Continuity and Change, 9,3, (1994), p.391-419.
[55] W. Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew (c.1591), IV,v,1-23; K. Newman, Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama (Chicago,1991), p.41-45.
[56] B. Rich, The Excellency of Good Women (London,1613), p.7; F. Barbaro, On Wifely Duties, as cited in P. Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories: the Body Enclosed', in M.W. Ferguson, M.Quilligan, and N.J. Vickers, Rewriting the Renaissance: the Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe (Chicago,1987), p.127.
[57] H. Smith, A Preparative to Marriage (London,1591), as cited in K. Newman, Fashioning Femininity, p.11; see also L. Jardine, Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare (New York,1989), p.121-124; and Gowing, 'Women', pp.70-71,87-88.

eye and a chaste ear, a silent tongue and a considerate heart, wary and heedful of myself in all my words and actions."[58]

Ironically, the strength and force of men's reaction to women's talk is evidence in itself of their fear of the power of female speech. However, if we turn now to church court records, we can see that men's anxieties about the effect of gossip on reputation were not entirely ill founded. Gossip was frightening because of the speed at which it could travel: "nothing fleeth more swiftly than an ill word" wrote Gibbon in 1594.[59] In 1608 the Durham church court heard how Agnes Huntley called her mother whore one Sunday in Sandgate in front of widow Alice Hearon. The very next morning another widow, Isabelle Road, who had not been present at Alice's house, questioned Agnes as to why she had slandered her mother.[60] Amussen's study of Norwich church courts has shown how gossip allowed the reputation of a person to travel with them even when they moved into a new community. In Shropham in 1618 Agnes Ayers called Anne Leight a whore and said she "was rung out of Hilborough and Swaffham with a basin". Shropham was at least eleven miles from Hilborough, and fourteen from Swaffham.[61] The "common voice, fame and report" concerning a person's behaviour could also be remembered for a long period of time. Gossip which had been circulating within a community for a number of years could suddenly be used to discredit the person involved. For example, the rumour that Alice Scroggs, wife of Thomas, had slept with two men before her marriage was raised in Durham consistory

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[58] L. Pollock, With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620 (London,1993), p.26-29; for a further discussion of scolds see below pp.137-142,150-151,224-227.
[59] Gibbon, The Praise, sig.,A2.
[60] DDR.V.9.f.61.
[61] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.98.

court in February 1610 some eight to thirteen years after the supposed relationships had ended.[62]

Those who bore a grudge could deliberately spread malicious gossip and endanger reputation. In 1620, after she had been reproved for her loose living by her vicar William Dixon, Agnes Swale of Osmotherley started to gossip to her neighbours that the vicar had made sexual advances to her.[63] Hindle's case of Margaret Knowsley and the preacher Stephen Jerome has shown how godly officials were open to such charges of sexual hypocrisy.[64] There are also cases that show how people could be bribed to spread false gossip. For example, Andrew Conny of Evenwood discovered in 1616 that his granddaughter had been given a neck cloth for spreading gossip that she saw one Jane Lyndsey stealing milk from another man's cows.[65]

The fears about gossip are put into context with the evidence that gossips were just as likely to be men as women. There are numerous examples of male gossips in the church court records. Around Candlemas 1604 a yeoman John Hutchinson visited Ralph Wall's house in Wolsingham to purchase a sword. "Taking occasion to talk of John Wheatley" Ralph Aire, who was also present told Hutchinson of an argument he had had with Wheatley. Aire then called Wheatley "an ass, a fool and a pickpurse." This conversation was overheard by John Oliver through the wall of widow Farrowe's house, and by Henry Jackson who was standing in Ralph Wall's garth. Its wide audience meant that the gossip got back to Wheatley and Aire ended up in court for

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[62] DDR.V.9.ff.289,290; unsurprisingly, witnesses differ over when the relationships took place before her marriage. For another example of members of a community having a longterm memory see DDR.V.9.f.87r in which Elizabeth Roddham recalled Elizabeth Stott insulting Christoper Skirrawe of Framwellgate three years before.
[63] DDR.V.11.ff.72v,73,74,75,82v,83r; see also Ingram, Church Courts, p.305-6 for other examples of how gossip could be started in this way.
[64] Hindle, 'The shaming', particulary p.401.
[65] DDR.V.10A.f.168r.

slander.[66] Further examples of men's behaviour being subject to the gossip of other men include the case of James Noble against Gregory Hutchinson. Gregory spread gossip which James claimed to be false about him committing adultery with Isabelle Moore in 1604.[67] Similarly, John Shipperson's reputation in Wearmouth was put into doubt by the gossip of Thomas Sparrow, who related to several neighbours, including the curate on several occasions, even in church, how he had found John in bed with Isabelle Shipperson, wife of Robert Shipperson.[68] But whilst in reality men did gossip, the sites of male and female gossip may have remained gender differentiated. That gossip was thought only to occur when a group was of one sex is shown by a 1774 guide to agricultural techniques, in which the writer advised other farmers to always place one man in a field of working women, for his presence would silence all gossip.[69]

Gossip was part of everyday life in the seventeenth century. It must have been difficult to avoid at some point being either the subject of gossip or acting as a participant in gossip about others. Gossip was something to be feared, as well as enjoyed, for it could be deeply threatening to reputation, not least because it was talk which occurred when its subject was not present to defend himself. Popular literature created a mythology about gossip which magnified these fears. Men were encouraged to believe that gossip was always defamatory talk conducted by women about men. Furthermore, women were portrayed as always gossiping about male conduct within the household. The consequential regulative effect of gossip is difficult to judge. Certainly, it is unlikely that in reality any man would have admitted to altering his

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[66] DDR.V.8.f.49; see below for the difference between gossip and slander, p.47-52.
[67] DDR.V.8.ff.78r,84a.
[68] DDR.V.8.ff.122v,123,124; the date of this case has faded. A. Clark has also found that many gossips were male in her survey of London church courts, 'Whores and gossips', in Angerman et al (eds), Current Issues in Women's History, p.240.
[69] A. Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England (Cambridge,1981), p.47.

behaviour because of gossip. However, men did respond to gossip in so far as they condemned it and attempted to control it by taking gossipers to court as scolds or slanderers. The defamation cases which men brought form the subject of the next two sections.

2.3 From gossip to slander

At what point did gossip become slander ? The previous section has shown how male stereotyping of female talk meant that in popular literature gossip and slander were often seen as synonymous. However, in law slander had a specific legal meaning, and certain conditions had to be satisfied if a defamation case was to be pursued successfully. Gossip was only slander if it could be proved that "words were uttered out of a malicious and angry mind, and besides, and against all fraternal charity."[70] Technically, the insult also had to attribute or imply a crime to the complainant over which the church court would hold jurisdiction, for example of fornication or adultery.[71] Strictly speaking, if an insult did not imply a spiritual crime then the suit should have been pursued at common law. [72]

The requirement that slander should be malicious speech meant that men and women could defend their words by arguing that they had spoken without evil intent. Hence in December 1619, when John Kirtley found that his gossip about the sexual reputation of the widow Katherine Harrison had reached Durham consistory court, his

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[70] H. C[onset], The Practice of the Spiritual or Ecclesiastical Courts (London,1685),p.335; see also, J. Godolphin, Repertorium Canonicum (London,1678), p.515; and Helmholz, 'Canonical', pp.256,261-262.
[71] Helmolz, 'Canonical', p.256-259.
[72] There remained disagreement throughout the seventeenth century as to which jurisdiction should deal with 'mixed' slander, that which included both a spiritual and temporal crime, and which should hear cases involving venereal disease, see R.H. Helmolz, Roman Canon Law in Reformation England (Cambridge,1990),p.56-58.

fellow servant Mary Hall defended him by saying that he had only spoken "two or three jesting words at which no ill was to be taken".[73] However, by pursuing a defamation suit, it is clear that Katherine Harrison did believe that his words were significant and damaging to her reputation. This case illustrates how someone had to take offence to the subject of gossip for it to become slander. In theory, one person's gossip could be another's slander. In this way one could conclude that loss of reputation was just a matter for individual interpretation, in which, for example, one person might find being called a knave highly insulting, whilst another would see such name calling as trivial or unimportant.

However, what becomes clear from a reading of defamation cases is that it was the circumstances in which words were spoken that could be crucial in determining whether talk was interpreted as defamatory. Gossip became slander when it was spoken aloud in front of an audience. Location was all important as it was when words were spoken in public, when they became an event, that they constituted slander.[74] As the preacher George Web recognised, "a Talebearer cannot rob a man of his good name, nor yet impair his credit, unless there be another to hear and to admit his slanders".[75] In the eyes of the law, the experience of dishonour was not an individual or personal one, but was concerned with being shamed in front of others. Hence, defamation cases reveal that both men and women were more likely to be deliberately slandered outside in the street where crowds could easily gather, than indoors. When men were insulted with intent inside it was in front of groups of other men, for example as guests at the dinner table or whilst drinking.[76] People did not

[73] DDR.V.10B.f.340v; Kirtley is also spelt Kirkley.
[74] L. Jardine, "Why should he call her whore?' Defamation and Desdemona's Case', in M. Tudeau-Clayton and M. Warner (eds), Addressing Frank Kermode: Essays in Criticism and Interpretation (Urbana,1991), p.136-140.
[75] G. Web, The Araignement of an Unruly Tongue (London,1619),p.159-160, as cited in Gowing, 'Women', p.90.
[76] See for examples, DDR.V.8.f.155r; DDR.V.10B.f.335r; DDR.V.11.f.57v.

expect to be slandered in their own homes. The popular phrase "every man's house is his Castle" which was in use in this period shows how owning a house brought with it ideas of the protection and sanctity of property.[77] Private talk in homes could become slander when it was accidentally overheard, as in the previously discussed case of John Wheatley and Ralph Aire.[78] But generally slander was condemned if it was directed against someone who was inside their house. The Thoraby and Blithman defamation case illustrates this point well. From the records of the Durham Quarter Sessions we know that on the 4 December 1606 Richard Blithman senior and Richard Blithman junior "broke into the residence of Thomas Thoraby at Durham city and attacked Elizabeth Thoraby, Thomas' wife, and Richard Blithman junior punched her on the left ear and struck her to the ground".[79] Two weeks later, Thomas Thoraby went to see Richard Blithman senior about this incident, furious that Richard had defiled the sanctity of his home.[80] When he arrived at the Blithman's house, Richard's wife shut the door on Thomas, believing that she would avoid trouble by so doing. But Thomas instead stood outside the Blithman's home and "fell into railing speeches against the said Richard Blithman and struck with a weapon against the door". Thomas' wife joined him and also called names, "whoremaster" and "knave". The Thorabys' only left when one Thomas Pearson arrived on the scene, "reprooving them for so abusing a man *in his own home*".[81] Another case tells of how in March 1624 John Lawne began to argue with Margaret Guye on the keyside in Newcastle. A witness recalls how she tried to get Margaret to go "into her own house to avoid the

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[77] Braithwait, The English Gentleman, p.155; Gowing shows how for women the walls of a house were seen as a safeguard for chastity, 'Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London', History Workshop Journal, 35, (1993), p.18.
[78] See above, p.46-47.
[79] No.65 membrane, Durham CRO, Q/S/I 2, as quoted in 'Durham Quarter Sessions Rolls 1471-1625', Edited and Calendered by C.M. Fraser, with an Introduction by K. Emsley, Surtees Society, 1991, vol.199.
[80] DDR.V.8.ff.211r,220,221r.
[81] DDR.V.8.f.212r; the italics are my own.

evil tongue of the said John Lawne".[82] Clearly it was expected that a house should act as a sanctuary from the verbal abuse of angry neighbours.

For plaintiffs to prove that gossip was slander, that private had become public, by definition they needed to have witnesses. Hence, in March 1618 when Anthony Garnett was accused by Marie Dobson in Newcastle of cheating her of five shillings, he immediately called "some about him to bear witness of her words".[83] Concern to have witnesses even extended to demands that defamatory words be repeated in front of an audience when hitherto they had been part of a private exchange of gossip. So when Roger Colson of Ryton told John Sander in the entry of a house where they were having dinner of gossip about his wife, John responded by fetching two friends from the dinner and willed Roger to repeat what he had said. Roger did so, "I told you privately that one Katherine Foggert did report that your wife did nothing when you were at London but went a whoring up and down with Robert Brigges". By introducing an audience John Sander effectively changed gossip into defamation, allowing him then the opportunity to respond legally to kill the gossip and fight the insult. Two years later in July 1621 John Sander's wife launched a defamation suit against Roger Colson in which John's witnesses faithfully repeated what they had heard Roger say the night of the dinner party.[84]

There is also much evidence to suggest that when contemporaries intended to insult each other they were aware of the need for an audience if their words were to have force. Witnesses emphasize how slanderers deliberately shouted or repeated their insults so others could hear. For example, in October 1620 Durham consistory court

[82] DDR.V.11.f.293r.
[83] DDR.V.10B.f.372v,373.
[84] DDR.V.11.f.162r,170; it is not clear why the case was delayed for two years. For cases of wives bringing cases when their husbands have been told gossip about their behaviour see below p.126-130.

heard how when Elizabeth Wann called Marie Boyer whore in Elvet, Durham city, she spoke so loudly that "she might be heard a great way off", and later that year when George Wheatley insulted Elizabeth Taler in the street at Ravenscroft he was so loud that their neighbours were drawn out of their houses to see what all the noise was about.[85] In contrast, when Mary Hedworth was accused of slandering a fellow servant Jane Porter by saying she aborted her illegitimate baby in 1625 one witness, Margaret Fetherston, claimed in her defence that although Mary had told her of Jane's actions with the baby, she had not spoken "with any intent to defame the said Jane Porter for that she spoke them privately to this examinate".[86]

In some cases the reputation of the witnesses themselves was called into question. Strictly speaking, the law stated that gossip was only defamation if it had been spread amongst people whose good opinion was worth having.[87] Certainly, it seems logical that gossip would have been more believable if it was current amongst those generally held with credit in the community; Rosse in Macbeth (1606) gives credence to reports when he states that "there ran a rumour/ Of many worthy fellows".[88] Some witnesses try to support those who have been defamed by claiming that it is only those who are themselves discreditable who will believe the malicious gossip. For example, in 1606 when Anne Harrison of Ovingham, Durham was accused by Margaret Belly of losing her maidenhead before she was married, John Nicholson claimed that as a consequence "some persons will believe that the said Anne is not honest although honest and credible persons will nor cannot so think or repute her so to be."[89] Similarly, a year later when Margaret Richardson of Gateshead came to defend Isabelle Blithman from

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[85] DDR.V.11.f.99r; DDR.V.11.f.177r.
[86] DDR.V.11.f.333r.
[87] R.H. Helmholz (ed.), Select Cases on Defamation to 1600, Selden Society vol.101, (London,1985), xxxiv-xxxv.
[88] W. Shakespeare, Macbeth (1606), IV,iii,182-183.
[89] DDR.V.8.f.198r.

the slander of whore, she said "that there is none that is honest will think the worse of the said Isabelle" as a result of the words uttered against her.[90] In contrast, those who act for the defendant in defamation cases occasionally try to discredit the reputations of the plaintiff's witnesses. The most frequent charge is that the witness was poor and needy, which may have been a way of suggesting to the court that they were open to bribery.[91] One female witness was accused of keeping a brothel, and another of not living with her husband, frequently drinking and playing cards.[92] Once gossip became slander and a defamation suit was launched, the reputations of more than the plaintiff and defendant could be at stake.

2.4 The Subject of Slander and the Content of Male Reputation

While the proportion of female plaintiffs over men fighting defamation cases was increasing during the seventeenth century, a significant number of men continued to use the church courts to defend their reputations. In Durham 76 out of the 225 defamation cases I have found from the records that survive from between 1604 and 1637, and 1662 and 1665, were brought by men.[93] By studying the words of insult we can learn what men found damaging to their reputation and how they went about defending their good names once slander had been uttered.

Unlike most women who came to the church courts, men fought defamation suits against both sexual and non-sexual insults. But perhaps because women outnumbered

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[90] DDR.V.9.f.6v; for another example see DDR.V.9.f.24r; for further discussion of the consequences of being dishonoured in front of 'honourable' men see below, p.161-162.

[91] See for examples, DDR.V.10A,f.19r; DDR.V.11.f.303v; DDR.V.12.f.162v.

[92] DDR.V.10A.f.18v; DDR.V.10B.f.440r and DDR.V.11.f.80v.

[93] Cases are taken from DDR.V.8 to DDR.V.12 inclusive dating 1604-September 1631, and from a box of unbound depositions (DDR.Box, no.414) dating 1633-34,1636-37,1662-63 and 1664-65.

male plaintiffs, or because some of the insults directed against men were vague in meaning, for example 'knave' and 'rogue', historians have neglected to study in depth the details of defamation cases brought by men.[94] In fact, Durham records show that the number of cases in which men were simply called knave or rogue was very small, and that when such name calling was employed it was more frequently in conjunction with other insults. For example, Margaret Harlem called Thomas Wrangham "false dissembling knave" to imply dishonesty after she felt she had been cheated of coals in Tynemouth, and at Michaelmas 1623/4 in Lumley Park Isabell Walker stirred anti-Catholic prejudice by calling Ralph Blakeston "popish rogue and popish rascal".[95] Most non-sexual insults which were directed against men can be categorised into one of three groups: those which questioned the status of a man's parents, those which attempted to damage a man's economic livelihood, and lastly those which claimed that a man could not control his affairs because of drinking.

Questioning a man's status in a society which had a keen sense of social order and hierarchy was one obvious way of damaging his reputation. In March 1606 when Agnes and John Rand quarrelled with John Johnson next to the castle in Newcastle they called him a "Scotty Rogue", "Vagabond", and most importantly, claimed that "no man knew from where he came".[96] From these insults the Rands were labelling Johnson as an outsider who had no place in the social world in which they belonged. A man who did not have a position in the social order was by definition a threat to it, the insult vagabond suggesting idleness and dishonesty. We might expect suspicion of strangers in small village communities, but it seems that even in a city such as Newcastle a man's reputation rested on knowledge of his parentage and family.

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[94] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.102; Ingram, Church Courts, p.296-297.
[95] DDR.V.9.f.197r; DDR.V.11.f.292v.
[96] DDR.V.8.ff.166-167.

A man's good name rested not only upon common knowledge about who his parents were, but also upon the worthiness of their reputations. Hence, in midsummer 1606 in Miles Jefferson's garth in Norton, Robert Law in the presence of several others of his neighbours openly challenged Ralph Pattenson's good name by asking, "what art thou?". Ralph Pattenson replied, not giving his occupation as we might expect, but by simply stating that "he was an honest man's son". This provoked a torrent of abuse from Robert, "Nay...thou came of a horse stealer, and a sheep stealer and such was thy father thou came of". We know that Ralph's father was still alive because it is stated that Ralph is the father of John. So it is interesting that Ralph's father left it up to his son to clear that family name. That Ralph took the case to court may well indicate that he believed that a stain on his father's reputation could also tarnish his good name.[97] Indeed, another case heard twenty years later may show how an insult was perceived to have greater force if it also involved the slandering of a man's kin. When Ann Strawe called Francis Maltby of Cornforth thief, mainsworne rascal and a beggar, she followed each insult with the words "and all thy kind".[98] In the Restoration period, Robert Bendish, a merchant of Eastham, Essex, believed that he could defend himself against his wife's charges of cruelty by claiming that he was "highly provoked" by her insults against his family. He claimed that she had called his sisters "whores", and his family "base mean and beggarly". Insults against a man's family were clearly not expected to be borne lightly.[99]

The idea that honour or shame could be inherited from one generation to the next is seen in the case of Timothy Barnes against Mary Barnes wife of Emmanuel. A complex series of events one evening in January led to Mary bringing a defamation suit

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[97] DDR.V.8.f.173.
[98] DDR.V.11.ff.507v,508.
[99] CA, Case 757, (1673), Ee3, f.59.

against Timothy in March 1605, and Timothy bringing a case against Mary in July of the same year. On intelligence that there were papists in Wolsingham Timothy Barnes in January 1605 had gone to Emmanuel Barnes' house accompanied by a constable. Mary was enraged to see Timothy in the house and ordered him to leave. An argument then broke out. It is obvious from the way that Mary and Timothy interact that this case only reveals a glimpse of a long term quarrel between the pair. What is most interesting is how their name calling led to a questioning of the status of their parents. According to the churchwarden Thomas Wright, when Mary called Timothy a rogue, he questioned this and asserted "I am descended of honour", "of honour, said she, no", and claimed that he was a priest's bastard son. Another witness, William Woodend says that Timothy also claimed that "he was a lord's son...and he was comed of better parents than she".[100]

Whilst Timothy Barnes was probably at the upper end of the 'middling sort' as he was "employed about the king's business", what these cases show is an awareness of the concept of a man's reputation being inherited through lineage within social groups well below the gentry.[101] Furthermore, in a society of social change and upheaval, where new members of a community needed to be integrated into the social hierarchy, it was increasingly important for men to assert 'where they came from' and to compare their reputation with others. The competitiveness which ensued could result in defamation cases similar to the Barnes case described above.

In a period in which a man's identity was closely linked with his occupational status, and in which there was a keen sense of the honour of certain trades, an obvious way to damage reputation was to question professional competence or business credit

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100 DDR.V.8.ff.23v,24,28r,81v.
101 DDR.V.8.f.81v.

worthiness.[102] This could take a direct form, for example when Elizabeth Vincent's child died in the care of Thomas Handley in Newcastle she loudly cursed the doctor and wished that "God forbid that ever Handley take any work in hand that ever shall prosper". Her words took effect, for a witness stated that for Handley "his patients by reason of the said Elizabeth her speeches, are gone from him".[103] Other examples of insults which were directed at professional ability include that of Richard Whitfeild, alderman in Durham city in 1626, being accused of embezzling funds for orphans and from one Jane Foster, and that of John Kidd a curate of Escombe who was called a "base priest" by Henry Simpson.[104] When a man's good word and honesty were vital in so many business transactions, calling a man cheat, liar or thief was a powerful way to damage reputation. In theory the slander of theft should only have been actionable at common law, but in practice the church courts continued to hear such cases.[105] In an oral culture "no form of agreement was more trusted than the oral contract, for a person's word was his or her bond."[106] Unless a man could clear his name after being called a "mainsworn fellow" or a "forsworn villain" future transactions would be hindered because he would no longer hold the trust of his neighbours. 'Credit' meant both honesty and solvency in this period: the one affected the other.[107]

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102 For the honour of a trade see for example, N. Newbury, The Yeoman's Prerogative Or, The Honor of Husbandry (London,1652).
103 DDR.V.8.f.241.
104 DDR.V.12.f.43r; DDR.V.12.f.232r.
105 Godolphin, Repertorium Canonicum, p.516; and Sharpe, Defamation, pp.10,14.
106 A.P. Fox, 'Aspects of Oral Culture and its Development in Early Modern England', (University of Cambridge PhD,1992), p.13.
107 For examples of men being called cheat, mainsworn rascal, foresworn villain and thief see, DDR.V.12.f.195r; DDR.V.11.ff.507v,508r; DDR.V.9.f.183v; DDR.Box, no.414, (1633-34), Thomas Smith v. Henry Brignell. Mainsworn is an obscure form of mansworn and means the same as forsworn ie. perjured (OED). For the meaning of credit see, C. Muldrew, 'Credit and the courts: debt litigation in a seventeenth-century urban community', Economic History Review, XLVI,I,(1993),p.23-38 and Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.152-155.

Contemporary popular culture shows us that drinking was regarded as an important feature of male friendship and good fellowship. Drinking songs represented a large percentage of the ballads that were circulated throughout the seventeenth century.[108] Refusal to accept to drink to someone was considered an insult.[109] Drinking was so vital to male conviviality that a man could be mocked for not joining his friends in the alehouse, as William Bell of the city of Durham found when John Sheffeild taunted him in 1631 "that it was a shame for him" to be so "awebound to his wife in that he durst not drink a cup of ale with a friend".[110]

However, it was deeply insulting to men to be called drunk because it implied that through alcohol they had lost control over their minds and bodies. Thus slanders about drinking focused on the details of its physical consequences. For example, when Fortune Matthew of South Shields named John Patteson "foresworn drunken fellow" in February 1607, she also called him "spewbleck", a term which powerfully described how the excess of drinking led to uncontrollable vomiting and expulsion of dirt.[111] Richard Porrett also drew attention to the way that drink left men incapacitated when in midsummer 1610 he told Jane Whitefield how he knew that her husband was a "drunken fellow" because he had to be carried home one Saturday after drinking in Newcastle.[112]

Shakespeare's story of the lieutenant Cassio in Othello (c.1604) illustrates many of these ideas about drinking and shows how drunkenness could be dishonourable.

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[108] See for example, 'Good Ale for my Money',Roxburghe, vol.I, p.412-417; M.P.,'A Messe of Good Fellowes',Roxburghe, vol.II, p.143-148; see also the large group of ballads in the Pepys collection under the category 'Drinking and Good Fellowship'.
[109] For pledging see below pp.160-161,202-203.
[110] DDR.V.12.ff.290r,291r; see also P. Clark, The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 (London,1983), p.123-144.
[111] DDR.V.8.ff.223v,224r,234; see also Roper, Oedipus and the Devil, p.111-113.
[112] DDR.V.9.f.241r.

Cassio is goaded into drinking with "Cyprus gallants" by Iago who suggests that refusal would imply a lack of manliness. But Cassio's fear that his "weakness" to alcohol will leave him drunk is fulfilled. Once drunk he loses control and becomes embroiled in an argument with Roderigo. When Montano suggests to Cassio that he is drunk, Cassio interprets Montano's words as an insult and responds immediately by fighting. His behaviour robs him of all authority, he is stripped of his military command, labelled a "night-brawler", and "sham'd for ever."[113]

As the next chapter will demonstrate, men's authority over women rested on a claim to control and reason. Thus although some women were slandered as drunk, the insult was more powerful when applied to men. Moralistic ballads warned men that drunkenness robbed them of "reason and wit", led them to abuse themselves "with hand and tongue", leaving them little different from the "brutish Swine."[114] Certainly, the number of defamation cases brought against men who then claimed that they had slandered the plaintiff because they had been 'distempered' with drink, shows how in practice drinking did lead men to lose control.[115] Similarly, that some men tried to use drunkenness to defend their cruelty to their wives in separation cases shows the warnings of prescriptive literature that drink could make men violent were not without basis.[116] Men's sexual control over their wives was also hampered by drink. The porter in Macbeth (1606) compares the effects of drink with lechery and says that

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113 W. Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),II, iii, 26-303.
114 'The Good-fellow's Advice',Roxburghe, vol.III, p.261-267; 'The Young Man's Counsellor',Roxburghe,(c.1681),vol.IV, p.74-76.
115 See for examples, DDR.V.8.ff.217v,218a/r; DDR.V.11.ff.339v,340r; DDR.Box, no.414, (1633-34), Alice Coleman v. Amor Patterson.
116 For witnesses who describe wife beating occuring when the husband was drunk see for examples, CA, Case 1888,(1676),Eee6, f.278v; CA,Case 4688,(1690),Eee7, ff.120v,123r,124v,125v; for a plaintiff arguing that his "anger and passion" against his wife was increased with drink see CA, Case 2177,(1676),Ee4, f.799r. For examples of prescriptive ballads that warn that drink makes men violent see, 'The Bad-Husband's Folly', Roxburghe, (c.1680),vol.VI, part III, p.493-494, and 'The Married-Woman's Case', Pepys, (c.1625), vol.I, p.410-411.

drink is similar for it "provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance."[117] In Thomas Shadwell's Epson Wells (1672) Bisket and Fribble who repeatedly fall into bed drunk, both find themselves cuckolded by their wives.[118]

That men in reality could show concern about the effect of drinking on their reason is demonstrated in the writings of George Hilton, a Catholic gentleman from Westmorland who kept a diary in the first years of the eighteenth century. George was a frequent drinker, and marked his "fuddle days", as he called them, with elaborate asterisks in his diary. They reveal that he often drank two or three times a week, sometimes all day. Although married, his social life continued to be one of meeting male companions in the alehouse.[119] A typical entry is that of Thursday 22 June 1702 when he records a long lists of the taverns he frequented:

> at the Rose Tavern Temple Bar with Cos Hilton of Ormside and Mr Herbett, after at the Fountaine Ale house in King Street Westminster, after suffered a recovery at the Common Pleas Bar, after with Mr Brabin at the Kings Armes Tavern Great Wild Street, after picked up a couple of whores and got a severe clap.[120]

But at the start of 1702, after he had been involved in a drunken brawl at Appleby in which he had knocked out a man's eye, he had resolved to reduce the amount of time and money he spent on drinking. He was persuaded to make this resolution, he argued, because "I have often lost my reason by my immoderate drinking and am then too provoked to passion", drawing him into fights. Thus he claimed,

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117 Shakespeare, Macbeth (1606), II,iii,28-29.
118 L. Novell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy' (University of Florida PhD,1962), p.34-35.
119 For the changes that might be expected in male friendships upon marriage see below p.170-177.
120 A. Hillman (ed.), The Rake's Diary: The Journal of George Hilton (Westmorland,1994), p.41; the punctuation is my own.

> I am most passionately resolved to have so punctual a guard over my inclinations as never to loose my reason by immoderate drinking.

Within days George had broken his resolution, but his diary reveals that he clearly recognised what was at stake during his "fuddle days".[121]

2.5 Conclusions:

This chapter has examined various concepts of male reputation across different social groups. Whereas some ideas about reputation held greater currency for particular groups, for example those which related to honest business dealing, which were more applicable to the middling and lower sorts than the gentry, many were held in common. The idea that honour or dishonour could be inherited, for instance, appears to have been shared by all social groups, although it was the gentry who had the economic means and ostentation to visually display their lineage. Ideas about reputation were also subject to change, and amongst upper groups this meant an increasing emphasis on individual behaviour rather than a reliance on family name. For all men, it was behaviour which demonstrated control and exercise of reason that became most important to reputation. It was gender rather than social class that determined the make-up of male honour. As the next chapter will show, ideas about sexual control and sexual reputation crossed class boundaries and bound all men together.

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[121] Ibid.,p.28.

CHAPTER THREE: MANHOOD AND SEXUAL REPUTATION

3.1 Manhood

Manhood in the early modern period was a status to be acquired and then asserted to others. "Having a penis does not make the man", Thomas Laqueur has explained, describing a period in which men's reading of the body favoured the one-sex model and physiological difference between male and female was not clearly defined.[1] To differentiate themselves from women, and to obtain and maintain a position of power and dominance over women, men had to instead label certain behaviours as 'male' and others as 'female'. As Roper and Tosh have explained, "masculinity has always been defined in *relation* to 'the other'".[2] Becoming a man involved transition through key rites of passage in which young men had to demonstrate the gender roles of both self control and control of others. This control could be achieved through the exercise of reason and strength; the two key characteristics which men believed made them different from women. As Sir Thomas Smith explained in 1583, God had meant to give the male "great wit, bigger strength, and more courage to compel the woman to obey by reason or force".[3] But once the reputation for manhood had been won, it had to be continually proved and asserted, for manhood was never wholly secure.[4] The explanation for this insecurity was that the pivot on which manhood rested was the control of female sexuality, and this gave male fortunes an unstable foundation. As will be shown in this chapter, even if men exercised reason and strength, they could never know with certainty whether a woman was chaste, nor could they ever rest easy

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[1] T. Laqueur, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, Mass, 1990), p.115.
[2] Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction', in Roper and Tosh (eds), Manful Assertions, p.1.
[3] T. Smith, De Republica Anglorum, (London,1583), p.13, as cited in R.A. Houlbrooke, The English Family 1450-1700 (London,1986), p.103.
[4] Roper and. Tosh, 'Introduction', p.18.

as the maintenance of female chastity could never be guaranteed. For female honour based on sexual chastity was "an essence that's not seen". Othello's cry when he begins to suspect his wife of adultery captures this male dilemma,

> O curse of marriage,
> That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
> And not their appetites ![5]

3.2 Male Reason and the Dangers of Love

Men attempted to distinguish themselves from women by claiming they had a greater ability to reason. In Western philosophy there was a long tradition of thought stemming from Plato which associated reason with men. Men were different from beasts because of their reason, but women were thought nearer to the animal state than were men.[6] Hence Bassanes in Ford's play The Broken Heart (c.1629) reflects that whilst beasts are "only capable of sense", men are "endowed with reason", and thus are "verier beasts than beasts".[7] The contemporary philosopher Descartes (1596-1650) developed this model further by distinguishing the mind from the body, the male from the female.[8] In practice male exercise of self control through reason was contrasted with the 'weaker vessel's' susceptibility to passion, lust and temptation. The 1562 homily on marriage, read aloud from the pulpit,taught how,

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[5] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),IV,i,16; III,iii,272-274; for a discussion of these lines see L. Danson, "The Catastrophe is a Nuptial': The Space of Masculine Desire in Othello, Cymbeline, and The Winter's Tale', Shakespeare Survey, vol.46, (1994), p.69-79; and D. Cohen, Shakespeare's Culture of Violence (London,1993), p.119.

[6] K. Thomas, Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800 (London,1983), pp.30-32,43.

[7] Ford, The Broken Heart (c.1629), IV,ii, 18-28.

[8] G. Lloyd, The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy (London,1986), p.39-50; V.J. Seidler, Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality (London,1989), pp.14-15,18-19.

> The woman is a weak creature not endured with like strength and constancy of mind; therefore they be sooner disquieted and they be the more prone to all weak affectations and dispositions of mind, more than men be, and lighter they be and more vain in their fantasies and opinions.[9]

Men used their claim to reason to legitimize their authority over women. Thus William Gouge in 1634 explained the subordination of women because, "as an head preserveth, provideth for the body, so doth the husband his wife". Here Gouge associates the head with reason and manhood, the body with the female and the wife, who should obey her husband "because she is set under him, as his body under his head."[10] That this argument for male domination continued through the period can be seen in the letter the first Marquis of Halifax wrote to his daughter in 1688. He explained,

> That there is Inequality in the Sexes, and that for the better Economy of the World, the Men, who were to be the Law-givers, had the larger share of Reason bestow'd upon them...Your Sex wanteth our Reason for your Conduct, and our Strength for your Protection.[11]

For men the ability to reason and show self control was a skill to be learnt. "What wast thou, being an infant", asked Lewis Bayly, "but a brute having the shape of a man?"[12] The 1630 ballad 'Tis not otherwise' tells the story of a young man who used to preach against marriage, but it is said that "Had years but given him man-like thoughts, he'd not been so unwise". Once he matures wisdom makes him a man and he is persuaded to marry.[13] Shakespeare's King Lear (c.1605) powerfully shows how an old

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[9] As cited in Fletcher, Gender, Sex and Subordination, p.70.
[10] W. Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties,Third edition, (London,1634), pp.28,77; see also Newman, Fashioning Femininity, p.15-16.
[11] G. Savile, 1st Marquis of Halifax, The Lady's New Year's Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter (London,1688), as cited in V. Jones (ed.), Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity (London,1990), p.18.
[12] Cited in P. Collinson, The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London, 1988), p.78.
[13] 'Tis not otherwise', Pepysian Garland, (1630), p.356-360.

king who loses his sense of reason and good judgement also jeopardizes his manhood. As Lear's madness sets in he fears that his manhood is shaken when, unable to master his emotions, he is subject to "women's weapons" or "hot tears"; his crown is replaced by a garland of wild flowers; and when reunited with Cordelia she observes her "child-changed father." If Lear's daughters can show that their father has no reason, they know that he will no longer be judged a fit king worthy to rule others. So a man's reason can be dependant on age; it is absent in a child, has to be learnt to obtain full manhood, but is in danger of being lost in old age.[14] Manhood is at risk at any point if there are signs of lack of reason; Macbeth (1606) is "unmann'd" when his guilt about the murder of Banquo causes him to lose his grip on reason, and he imagines that he has seen Banquo's ghost.[15]

Whilst one proverb ran that "a man without reason is a beast in season", another taught that "it is impossible to love and be wise".[16] Relationships with women endangered men's ability to reason. Falling in love was regarded as a loss of self control, when men became irrational and thus more closely associated with the female. Men in love relinquished their control and power to women, a matter which had been recognised from the time of Chaucer. The gender hierarchy was altered during courtship, so a man might be a woman's "servant in love, and master in marriage".[17] The remarkable autobiography of Thomas Whythorne, a Tudor musician, shows how one man struggled with the unsettling experience of courtship. After one relationship ended he reflected bitterly how, "she would have had me her slave to triumph over".

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[14] W. Shakespeare, King Lear (c.1605),I,iv,294-6; II,iv,275-6; IV,vi; IV,vii,17.
[15] Shakespeare, Macbeth (1606), III,iv,44-120.
[16] M.P. Tilley, A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Michigan,1950), M306; L558.
[17] G. Chaucer, The Franklin's Tale,l.793, as cited in L. Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 (Urbana,1986), p.184.

Whythorne believed that being in love led him to "embrace Venus' darlings more than reason would have". As he thought that "the difference between man the commander, and beasts being by man commanded, is only Reason in men", he resolved in future to "estrange myself from all loving occasions". For Whythorne relationships with women were full of hidden dangers which tempted men to "follow nature rather than reason after the manner of brute beasts".[18] Similar complaints by men about courtship are found at the end of the seventeenth century in a 1693(?) answer to a woman's petition to Parliament, A Humble Remonstrance of the Bachelors in which men argued that to woo a woman "We must treat them like Goddesses, lie prostrate at their feet, make Presents so expensive and numerous that perhaps the Wife's portion will scarce make amends for what the Mistress exorted from us."[19]

Within contemporary drama there are numerous references to the way in which love disempowered men. Othello's love for Desdemona leads Cassio to recognize her as "our great captain's captain", and Othello himself realizes that "she might lie by an emperor's side, and command him tasks."[20] Iago describes love as something which leads men to lose self control, "It is merely a lust of blood, and a permission of the will".[21] It exposes what men should have the power to hide, to the point where Roderigo is a man "whom love has turn'd almost the wrong side outward".[22] Love makes men effeminate and inverts traditional gender roles. Men who are in love forget their military duty. Othello is concerned that if Desdemona accompanies him to

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[18] J.M. Osborn, The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne (Oxford,1961), pp.55,74,206, as cited in K. Hodgkin, 'Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery', History Workshop Journal, 29, (1990), pp.31,34.
[19] Cited in, M.S. Kimmel, 'The Contemporary 'Crisis' of Masculinity in Historical Perspective', in H. Brod (ed.), The Making of Masculinities: The New Man's Studies (Boston,1987), p.130.
[20] Shakespeare, Othello (c.1604), II,i,74; IV,i,180-181; see also II,iii,305-6, "Our general's wife is now the general".
[21] Ibid., I,iii,335-6.
[22] Ibid., II,iii,48.

Cyprus he may be seen to neglect his military command; Claudio in Much Ado about Nothing (1598) notes how once thoughts of war,

> Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
> Come- thronging soft and delicate desires,

and Benedick mocks a man in love who once,

> when he would have walked ten mile afoot, to see a good armour,
> and now he will lie ten nights awake carving the fashion of a new
> doublet.

A further example is when Romeo reflects,

> O sweet Juliet,
> Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
> And in my temper soften'd valour's steel! [23]

Men's fears about effeminacy remained as strong at the end of the seventeenth century. In Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife (1697) Heartfree is so 'wounded' by the love he has for Bellinda that he doubts whether he will "have courage enough to draw my sword", a sword being a well known euphemism for a penis.[24] When Horner in Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675) says that "Good fellowship and friendship are lasting,

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[23] Ibid., I,iii,261-268; W. Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing (1598), I,i,228-9; II,iii,13-15; W. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet (c.1595), III,i,115-117; see also, Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance, pp.159-163,279-280.
[24] J. Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife (1697), IV,iii,128-130; E. Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy: A Literary and Psychological Essay And a Comprehensive Glossary (London,1955), p.199; E.A.M. Colman, The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare (London,1974), p.217; and M. Gohlke, "'I wooed thee with my sword' Shakespeare's Tragic Paradigms', in C.R.S. Lenz, G. Greene and C.Thomas Neely (eds), The Woman's Part Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare (London,1980), p.150-170.

rational, and manly pleasures", Harcourt replies "For all that, give me some of those pleasures you call effeminate too."[25] In a scathing poem "Upon Friendship, preferre'd to Love" Wycherley continued the theme of his play by claiming that friendship was "The Manly Virtue of the Soul, that's Great,/ Love, is a Vice, Mean and Effeminate".[26] Heartwell in William Congreve's The Old Batchelor (1693) describes love as something that drains away his manhood,

> That ever that noble passion, lust should ebb
> to this degree - No reflux of vigorous blood; but milky
> love supplies the empty channels, and prompts me to the
> softness of a child.[27]

But whilst drama exposed the fears that men may have had about courtship, we also know that wooing a woman was vital if a man was to prove his manhood to others and to himself. In Reformation Augsburg, Lyndal Roper has suggested, "To be a man was to have the power to take a woman", and evidence suggests that the same criteria were applied to Englishmen.[28] Roger Lowe, an apprentice to a south-Lancashire mercer in the mid-seventeenth century, spends much of his diary describing his wooing of first Mary Naylor and then Em Potter. His male friends play important roles in his courtship of women, providing advice as well as approval of his choice of partner. By clinging on to homosocial bonds whilst wooing women, men such as Roger Lowe may also have hoped to prevent any slippage into effeminate behaviour. He goes to the

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[25] Wycherley, The Country Wife (1675), I,i,209-212.
[26] M. Summers (ed.), The Complete Works of William Wycherley, (Soho,1924), vol.3, p.43,lines 25-26, cited in P. Thompson, 'The Limits of Parody in The Country Wife', Studies in Philology, vol.89, (1992), p.107.
[27] W. Congreve, The Old Batchelor, (1693), III,iv, cited in D.M. Turner, 'Rakes, Libertines and Sexual Honour in Restoration England,1660-1700', (University of Durham MA,1994), p.10-11.
[28] L. Roper, The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg (Oxford,1989), p.86.

alehouse and talks to them about "how to get wives"; and on a walk with John Hasledon he describes how they "talked of wenches", with Roger then offering to write a love letter to John's wench in Ireland. Roger often accompanied his friends when they visited their lovers, and when his fellow apprentice John Chadocke is married, he visits John's house early one morning less than a fortnight after the marriage, sits at the "bed's feet and we talked of everything, something about his marriage, and about what had happened upon the Lord's day about clothes for me."[29]

Men's talk can be further illustrated from church court records that tell of sexual bragging and boasting. In August 1608 in an alehouse in Gateshead Thomas Claxton said that if he wanted he could have sex with the wife of the alehouse owner, telling her "where may not I have the use of your body". His claim to be sexually irresistible then became more exaggerated when he told his friends "if he would he could procure any gentlewoman in Newcastle to come to his bedside that night".[30] In a house in Silver Street, Durham city, during November 1615, Nicholas Smith called a widow Elizabeth Whitfield whore, said she had been pregnant, and then claimed to have had carnal knowledge of her body over forty times in three different rooms of her house.[31] William Dane told his friend John Nicolson that he had had sex with the unmarried Alice Teasdell of Wearmouth six times in one night in 1619; and in 1622 the Durham court heard how Thomas Laburne, talking of "Venus sport" one morning with his friends, said that a married woman had paid him three pence to have sex the previous night, and that he had been left "somewhat raw".[32] Finally, Edward Arnold's drinking companions testified against him when his wife sued for separation on grounds of

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[29] W.L. Sachse (ed.), The Diary of Roger Lowe (London,1938), pp.37,43,50-51; see also, J.R. Gillis, For Better, For Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present (Oxford,1985), p.36-37.
[30] DDR.V.9.f.78.
[31] DDR.V.10A.ff.108,109r.
[32] DDR.V.10B.ff.415v,416,426v,427r,447; DDR.V.11.ff.179,187.

adultery in 1668, saying that Edward had often told them that "he could not leave off his wenching...[for]...he could and would have a wench anywhere."[33]

Why did these men boast about sex? Clearly the alehouse setting of many of these cases must have contributed to the exaggeration of stories by the narrators and the likelihood of the intoxicated audience finding the talk credible and enjoyable. Tim Meldrum's study of London church court records has led him to argue that male boasting about sex reveals that men were "far from worrying about their sexual reputation" and instead "positively revelled in their notoriety."[34] If the men who boasted in alehouses did not care whether the sex they had had with unmarried women or wives was illicit in the eyes of the church authorities, this does not mean that they were unconcerned about their sexual reputation. In fact, boasting about sex was all about attempting to win approval and admiration from others, about gaining the reputation of a man who could "have a wench anywhere".

Furthermore, apart from Edward Arnold, as far as we know all the men in the cases cited above were unmarried. So it is conceivable that boasting exposes the desire of single young men to prove their manhood amongst their peers by claiming experience of sex. Perhaps the need to boast, the need to assert sexual achievement, also stemmed from male insecurity and was concerned more with wishful thinking than reality.

Men's need to prove themselves sexually competent before marriage, and their sensitivity about sexual reputation at this stage in their life cycle is shown by their

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[33] CA,Case 219,(1668),Eee3, f.211r; for more examples of men boasting see G.R. Quaife, Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England (London,1979), p.54.
[34] Meldrum, 'A Women's Court', p.10.

reaction to rejection during courtship. When a man was refused his response was often to angrily insult the woman he had been courting. When Roger Lowe was rejected by Mary Naylor in May 1664 he called her a "false dissembling hearted person."[35] J.R. Gillis has found a 1591 London church court case which describes how the rejected Gabriell Holt told his neighbours that "he did defile [her] body" and tried to have his ex-lover presented as an immoral woman.[36] Nicholas Smith's slandering of Elizabeth Whitfield as a whore after he had sex with her in Durham city in 1615 also bears the behavioural hallmarks of a jilted lover.[37] The anger of these men was more than just a reflection of personal disappointment, but was a sign of concern about what others would think. By publicly degrading a woman by insulting her, the man was making her a prize not worth having, and so diminished the seriousness of his loss. It was also a means of openly distancing his reputation from hers.[38]

There can be little doubt from the fictional evidence that rejection was popularly regarded as a humiliating experience. In the ballad 'Poor Robin's Miserable Misfortunes' when Robin, a musician, goes to court "young Kate" she laughs at him, makes him break his fiddle, and when he tries to kiss her she threatens him with a knife, forcing him to "run for his life". Robin is made to look a fool and Kate's treatment of him leaves him "with loss and disgrace".[39] In another ballad a country gallant pleads with his love to marry him saying, "let not my suit be now disgraced".[40] As Wilding warns Mrs Wittwoud as he tries to woo her in the 1692 comedy The

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[35] Sachse, (ed.), The Diary of Roger Lowe, p.61.
[36] W.H. Hale, A Series of Presentments and Proceedings in Criminal Causes, 1475-1640, from Act-Books of the Ecclesiastical Courts of the Diocese of London (London,1947), p.205, cited in Gillis, For Better, For Worse, p.40.
[37] DDR.V.10A.ff.108,109r; see above, p.69.
[38] For cuckolded husbands who respond by calling their wives whores see below, p.213-214.
[39] 'Poor Robin's Miserable Misfortunes' Pepys, vol.IV, p.97.
[40] 'Children after the rate of 24 in a year', Pepys, (c.1635), vol.I, p.404-405.

Wives' Excuse, there was so much honour at stake when a man went courting that, "'tis a very difficult matter...to refuse a man handsomly".[41]

3.3 The Making of Marriage

"Marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled: but Whoremongers and Adulterers, God will judge", wrote Daniel Rogers, quoting Hebrews in his treatise in favour of marriage.[42] Marriage was an "honourable state of life" in the early modern period for both men and women.[43] It allowed couples to have sex without fear of prosecution from the church authorities and to have children so that as Niccholes explained, "by the excellency and blessing of this institution, thou continuest thy name".[44] The honour that a man gained through marriage was recognised by others in his community; from modes of address to church seating, marriage brought with it privilege and respect.[45] Marriage conferred status: "We do not call any a 'yeoman'", observed Sir Thomas Smith, "'till he be married and have children and have as it were some authority among his neighbours."[46] In one contemporary ballad a wife answers her husband's complaints about being forced to give up a single life by arguing that "a Wife hath won you credit, a wife makes you esteem'd." She says that since marriage

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[41] T. Southerne, The Wives' Excuse: Or, Cuckolds make Themselves, (1692), II,iii,130-131.
[42] Rogers, Matrimoniall Honour, p.1.
[43] Anon, The Court of good Counsell (London,1607), sig.,B1.
[44] A. Niccholes, A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving (London,1620), p.5.
[45] Gillis, For Better, For Worse, p.15-16; for more on church seating see below, p.158-160.
[46] T. Smith, De Republica Anglorum, (London,1583), cited in, K. Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', Proceedings of the British Academy, 62,(1976), p.226.

the "chief men of the Parish" request his acquaintance and he has been made a churchwarden.[47]

By entering marriage, however, a man also exposed his honour to new risks and dangers. It was important initially that the match be an honourable one. Furthermore, a man was expected to ensure that the honour gained on the marriage day was preserved throughout the course of the marriage. The test of manhood continued through marriage and the stakes were high,

> for whosoever marries a wife may well be called a Merchant venturer, for he makes a great adventure that adventures his credit, his reputation, his estate, his quiet, his liberty, yea many men by marriage do not only adventure their bodies but many times their souls.[48]

For marriage to be honourable the match needed to be approved by family and friends. In The Country Wife (1675) Sparkish is anxious to hear from his friend Harcourt whether he approves of his marriage choice, and twice asks him if he likes Alithea. As Sparkish admits,

> I love to be envied, and would not marry a wife that I alone could love. Loving alone is as dull as eating alone. [49]

Puritan writers of conduct books taught how this approval was most likely to be won if the couple were equal in age, wealth and faith.[50] The most important consideration

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[47] 'The Lamentation of a new married man', Pepys, (c.1630), vol.I, p.380-381; for ballads with a similar theme see, "Tis not otherwise', Pepysian Garland, p.356-360, and 'The Benefit of Marriage', Euing, p.23-24.
[48] Rich, The Excellency of Good Women, p.9.
[49] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),II,i,136,145,149; III,ii,372-3.

for a man in his choice of partner, however, was a woman's virtue. If his marriage partner was not a virgin on the wedding day then the husband could never claim his wife to be his exclusive property. Furthermore, her lack of virtue before marriage was interpreted as a sign of her behaviour in the future; dishonest maids would make dishonest wives. Here a double sexual standard is most apparent for, as we have seen, although women were expected to remain chaste preceding marriage, men frequently proved their manhood by gaining sexual experience before entering into a formal partnership. The mismatch between the requirements of these two honour systems is clear.[51]

That men were expected to reject as potential marriage partners those women who were not virgins can be seen from the grievances of plaintiffs in defamation suits. Unmarried women who have been slandered as whores complain that they have had their marriage prospects ruined. For example, when Thomas Frinde of Bishop Auckland spread reports in Lent 1615 that Margaret Lever had had a child the Christmas before, she told the court how his slanderous stories, "will be a great hindrance of her preferment in her marriage."[52] With these attitudes in mind, Claudio's dramatic rejection of Hero at the altar in Much Ado about Nothing (1598), after he believes she has been unchaste, is put into context. Don Juan has told Claudio that "it would better fit your honour to change your mind" about his marriage choice, and Claudio then treats Hero as a woman who would have tarnished his honour, for to marry her would be "to knit my soul to an approved wanton."[53]

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[50] See for example, Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, especially p.179-199.
[51] B.J. Gibbons, 'Gender in British Behmenist Thought', (University of Durham, Phd, 1993), p.43.
[52] DDR.V.10A.f.10a; see also, DDR.V.8.f.198r; for further examples see Ingram, Church Courts, p.310-311.
[53] Shakespeare, Much Ado about Nothing (1598), III,ii,84-85; IV,i,39.

Claudio's words reflect his concern that his partner's dishonour and sexual reputation will in marriage become indistinguishable from his own; they will be 'knitted' together. In Middleton and Rowley's The Changeling (1622) Beatrice's first suitor Alonzo tries to dismiss his friend's fears about Beatrice's chastity. However, he admits that her reputation will affect his honour,

> I can endure
> Much, till I meet an injury to her,
> Then I am not myself.[54]

But establishing a woman's honour before marriage was not an easy task. Without a physical examination a man depended on the honesty of a maid's word that she was a virgin. The fear that women's words were not be trusted is shown in ballads such as 'Children after the rate of 24 in a year' in which a woman feigns virginity to win the heart of a gallant, but within a month of their marriage she delivers another man's baby, leaving her husband to "rock the cradle...when the child's none of his own."[55] Men's attempts to find a reliable way of testing virginity extended from Pliny into the seventeenth century. The tests held much popular interest, and Middleton and Rowley feature them in three of their plays.[56] Beatrice in The Changeling discovers that Alsemero carries with him a box of potions with which he can test a woman's virginity. As Beatrice fears that Alsemero will kill her if he finds that she has lost her virginity, she fools him into believing that she still has her maidenhead by learning the correct antics of a virgin when the potion is drunk. Even when she puts her servant maid into

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[54] T. Middleton and W. Rowley, The Changeling (1622), II,i,151-153.
[55] 'Children after the rate of 24 in a year', Pepys (c.1635),vol.I, p.404-405; for issues of paternity see chapter 5.
[56] C. Kahn, 'Whores and Wives in Jacobean Drama', in D. Kehler and S. Baker (eds), In Another Country: Feminist Perspectives on Renaissance Drama (London,1991), p.255-256; D.B. Randall, 'Some Observations on the Theme of Chastity in The Changeling', English Literary Renaissance, vol.14, (1984), p.347-366.

her place in the marriage bed Alsemero remains woefully ignorant.[57] That men in reality believed women were capable of such deception is illustrated by the evidence given by one witness during the separation suit of Elizabeth and Sampson Bound heard in the court of Arches in 1693. Elizabeth was accusing her husband of adultery and cruelty, he in turn defended himself by accusing her of being a drunk and an adulterer who had given him the pox. He also claimed that she had not been a virgin when he married her because she had already slept with two men. A female servant in their household, however, acted in Elizabeth's defence when she said that she had not heard of any "contrivance or stratagem" by Elizabeth "to foish or sham a Maidenhead upon...Sampson Bound by the said Elizabeth's using a bladder of Hogg's blood, or any other thing that might...imitate...that which in vertuous and modest Women is call'd a Maidenhead".[58] Sampson Bound wished the court to believe his wife capable of devising the most elaborate of schemes to fake her virginity and thus her sexual honesty. The methods he accused his wife of employing were similar to those described in one contemporary medical treatise. Ambrose Paré told his readers of how whores learnt to counterfeit virginity by inserting into their vaginas,

> the bladders of fishes, or galls of beasts filled with blood, and so deceive the ignorant and young lecher, by the fraud and deceit of their evil arts, and in the time of copulation they mix sighs with groans, and womanlike cryings, and the crocodiles tears, that they may seem to be virgins, and never to have dealt with man before.[59]

From day one of marriage, it seems, men's anxiety about how their wives might affect their honour could lead to suspicion and distrust.

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[57] T. Middleton and W. Rowley, The Changeling, (1622),IV,i,ii; V,i.
[58] CA, Case 1055, (1693), Eee7, f.681v.
[59] The Works of that famous Chirurgion, Ambrose Parey, trans. T. Johnson (London,1634), Book 24, p.938, cited in W.C. Carroll, 'The Virgin Not: Language and Sexuality in Shakespeare', Shakespeare Survey, vol.46, (1994), p.119.

3.4 Sexual Reputation in Marriage

> See the hell of having
> a false woman: my bed shall be abused, my coffers
> ransacked, my reputation gnawn at, and I shall not
> only receive this villainous wrong, but stand under
> the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that
> does me wrong. Terms! Names!....
> But
> cuckold? Wittol? Cuckold! The devil himself hath
> not such a name. [60]

'Cuckold' was the worst name a man could acquire. Derived from 'cuckoo', the bird that lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, the word came to signify not the lover but his victim, the husband of an adulterous woman.[61]

It has been argued both that the term cuckold was "concerned not with a man's sexuality, but with that of his wife", and that it had "far more potency when it was taken to mean sexual infidelity of wives, instead of their husband's failure to maintain patriarchal control over them."[62] However, an examination of a range of contemporary sources shows that in the popular mind there was a clear link between a husband's actions and sexual ability, and his wife's behaviour. A woman was not seen to be a whore without some fault of her husband. In Romei's discourse for gentlemen written in 1598 he discusses why a wife's adultery will dishonour her husband. "The

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[60] W. Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor, (1597) II,ii,280-285; 287-289; for the meaning of 'wittol' see below, p.230-231.
[61] Novell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy', p.1-8; C. Kahn, Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley,1981), p.120-121.
[62] Gowing, 'Women', p.29; see also L. Gowing, 'Language, power and the law: women's slander litigation in early modern London', in J. Kermode, and G. Walker, (eds), Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England (London,1994), p.29-30; Gowing, 'Gender and the Language of Insult' p.4; and Meldrum, 'A Women's Court', p.10.

wife...being in her husband's power, and under his government, it appeareth she cannot offend without some fault in her husband...and therefore it cannot be that the adulterous wife, should not in some part offend her husband's honour".[63] A conduct book written a few years later also held that husbands were accountable for their wives' actions. "For let all men be assured", it warned, "that the greatest part of the faults committed by wives in this age, take the beginning from the faults of their husbands". If a wife did offend, a husband was told to examine his own life "and he shall find how the occasion came from himself, and that he hath not used her, as he ought to have done".[64]

That 'using' a wife meant satisfying her sexually can be seen from the ballads and drama of the period. In popular medical thinking a woman who did not have adequate sex became ill. It was believed lack of sexual activity would give her an excess of 'seed', and cause "greensickness". The joke in the ballad of the 'The Cooper of Norfolk' is that not only is the cooper cuckolded by a brewer, but that the cooper has been such a poor or infrequent lover that the brewer also cures his wife of "green-sickness".[65] Cuckolds are defined in these sources as men who fail to give their wives sexual pleasure. Thus in the 1685 ballad 'Hey for Horn Fair!' women make their partners cuckolds by "forsaking their Husbands' dull bed".[66] In 'A New Western Ballad' a farmer is "so lazy in bed" that his wife commits adultery with the butcher, and in 'The Cuckold's Complaint' of c.1689-91 the husband realizes that because he

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[63] Romei, The Courtiers Academie, p.126-127.
[64] Anon, The Court of good Counsell (London,1607), sig.,C2.
[65] M.P.,'The Cooper of Norfolke', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.99-104; for greensickness see P. Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England' in V. Fildes (ed.), Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England (London,1990),p.6.
[66] 'Hey for Horn Fair!', Roxburghe, (1685), vol. VIII, part III, p.665-666; for horn fairs see below, p.147-149.

"cannot ple[ease]" his wife he deserves his fate.[67] In the former ballads women complain about the quality of their husbands' lovemaking, but in others women are forced to look for sex outside marriage because their husbands are impotent. The women in this latter category are portrayed as weary of their maidenheads, and their husbands' inability to consummate the marriage is seen as directly contributing to their cuckold status. So in the 1675 ballad 'Tom Farthing' a "weary" wife tells other maids to "try" men first before marriage, and vows "I'le find out one shall satisfy".[68] In c.1689 'The Scolding Wife's Vindication' featured a wife who commits adultery after two years of marriage "for nothing at all he'd do", and in another Restoration ballad "Mirth for Citizens" a husband becomes a cuckold fit for laughter because on his wedding night he remains a "young puny fool".[69] In other ballads young wives complain that their husbands are too elderly to satisfy them. The maid in 'The Doting Old Dad' despises her husband for his age, which he argues "ought to be Honour'd". When she complains to her mother she advises her daughter to do as she did "when my old Dad would deny, to yield me a daily supply", which was to find another lover. Whereas for women sexual energy is perceived as remaining a constant throughout life, older men are seen as having passed their sexual peak and are open to cuckolding.[70] Cuckoldry was considered to be so common a fate for the older man that the anonymous writer of the comic pamphlet Bull Feather Hall said that the word cuckold was derived from the initials of the words Cold Old Knave.[71]

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[67] 'A New Western Ballad', Pepys, vol. IV, p.125; 'The Cuckold's Complaint', Roxburghe, (c.1689-91), vol. VII, part II, p.431.
[68] 'Tom Farthing', Roxburghe, (1675),vol. VIII, part III, p.670-671.
[69] 'The Scolding Wife's Vindication', Roxburghe, (c.1689),vol. VII, part I, p.197; 'Mirth for Citizens', Roxburghe, (c.1671),vol. VIII, part III, p.699-700; see also, 'The Complaining Maid', Roxburghe, vol. VIII, part I-II, p.199; and 'The Discontented Bride', Pepys, vol. IV, p.119.
[70] 'The Doting Old Dad', Roxburghe, (1685-1688),vol. IV, p.412-413; see also, 'The Old Man's Complaint', Roxburghe, (c.1650) vol. VIII, part I-II, p.197, and 'The Young Woman's Complaint', Roxburghe, (c.1665) vol. VIII, part III, p.679-681; J. Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women and Female Power, p.150-151; Novell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy', pp.52,58-60,149.
[71] Anon, Bull Feather Hall, (London,1664), p.4.

The advice given in these ballads is that men would not be made cuckolds if they improved their sexual performance and satisfied their wives. So 'The discontented Married Man' tells another husband to love his wife "well and make much of her" if he wishes to avoid sharing his fate of being cuckolded, and the husband of 'The Wanton Wife of Castle-Gate' warns other young men to be "kind to your wives" so that "God will protect you by night and by day", presumably from the cuckold's horns.[72] 'The Well-Approved Doctor' tells the story of a London physician who was able to cure cuckolds. It is men who are his patients, and those cuckolds who claim that it is their wives' behaviour which is at fault are severely rebuked,

> But some are so wicked that they will exclaim
> Against their poor wives, making 'em bear the blame
> And will not look out in the least for a cure,
> But all the sad pains and their torture endure.[73]

In the drama of the same period husbands who have wives who are unfaithful also look to faults within themselves to explain their partners' behaviour. In Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603) when Frankford discovers his wife in bed with his friend he tries to understand why his wife has betrayed him. He asks her whether he neglected to supply her "with every pleasure, fashion and new toy". When she denies that this was her motivation Frankford shows his deepest fear, that there was some inadequacy in himself as a man that was the cause of her adultery,

> Was it then disability in me,
> Or in thine eye seemed he a properer man?[74]

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[72] 'The discontented Married Man', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.295-299; 'The Wanton Wife of Castle-gate', Roxburghe, (1670-89) vol. VII, part II, p.369-370.
[73] 'The Well-Approved Doctor', Pepys, vol. IV, p.149.

Frankford here assumes that his rival was able to seduce his wife because he was a better lover. 'Proper' in this period meant 'manly', 'handsome' and, in this case 'sexually attractive'. In Othello (c.1604) Cassio is referred to as a 'proper man', and such a man is seen as most likely to tempt Desdemona away from the marriage bed. Once more, these sources show the fear that it is a man's sexual inadequacy which makes him a cuckold.[75]

This view is expressed with even greater force in Restoration drama. In John Dryden's Marriage a la Mode (1671) Palamede tries to persuade Doralice that if she betrayed her husband by committing adultery it would be a fit punishment for his "lazy matrimony". Doralice later complains that she is a widow within marriage, for her husband has "starved" her of sex.[76] Horner warns the husbands in The Country Wife (1675) that women "are like/ soldiers, made constant and loyal by good pay rather/ than by oaths and covenants."[77] And in The Provoked Wife (1697) men are portrayed as getting what they deserve,

> a man of real worth scarce ever is a cuckold but by
> his own fault. Women are not naturally lewd; there must be
> something to urge 'em to it.[78]

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[74] T. Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603),I,XIII, 112-113.
[75] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604), I,iii,390, see also IV,iii,35; for other references to 'proper man' see, Shakespeare, Much Ado about Nothing (1598), II,iii,155 and V,i,155-156; Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida (c.1602), I,ii,183-184; J. Ford, Love's Sacrifice (c.1632), V,i,; Southerne, The Wives' Excuse, I,ii,49-50; see also Jardine, "Why should he call her whore",p.151-152, footnotes 39 and 43; and S.N. Garner, 'Shakespeare's Desdemona', Shakespeare Studies, lx, (1976), p.233-252.
[76] J. Dryden, Marriage a la Mode, (1671),II,i,240; III,i,92-98.
[77] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),I,i,464-466.
[78] Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife, (1697),V,iv,40-42, see also IV,iv,156-166 and I,i,89-91.

One of the contemporary explanations for a woman remaining barren in marriage was that she was not being satisfied sexually. Male medical opinion held that in order for conception to occur both men and women had to produce 'seed'. So unless a husband could help his wife to orgasm and so release her seed, she would not become pregnant.[79] Several ballads show that the principles of this medical thought were familiar to wider audiences. Awareness of the two-seed theory is shown in the ballad 'Pride's fall'. This ballad relates events which supposedly occurred in Geneva in 1609, with a woman telling us how God punished her for her vanity by scourging "my seed" so that she produced a two headed child.[80] In 'The West-country Wonder' William, a serving man, wins the "admiration of others" when he marries a widow who is nearly sixty-seven years old and manages to get her pregnant. By his wife's pregnancy William "prov'd himself a Man of Skill", and he is twice referred to as a "proper" man who "could Please a Woman well". The ballad writer explains that William made his wife pregnant by,

> Raising so sweet a Flower,
> From such decays of Nature,
> It shows a manly Power,
> Of one that would not bait her
> An ace of what's a Woman's due;
> Such a brawny Lad you never knew.[81]

Although in literature a woman's flower was usually the metaphor given to her hymen, in this ballad it is probably describing the clitoris, since William's wife presumably

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[79] P. Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England', and L.A. Pollock, 'Embarking on a rough passage: the experience of pregnancy in early-modern society', in V. Fildes (ed.), Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England (London,1990), pp.7,40-41.
[80] 'Pride's fall', Shirburn, No.XXXIII, p.134-139.
[81] 'The West-country Wonder', Euing, p.644.

would have lost her maidenhead in her previous marriage.[82] She is given an orgasm; her "due", and her flower is "raised"; producing the seed necessary for conception.

A court of Arches case tells of how in Whitsun 1669 Stephen Seagar of Aldgate suffered the ultimate humiliation of finding that not only had his apprentice Tarrant Reeves made him a cuckold when he was away on business, but that as a result his wife had become pregnant. Stephen found himself the laughing stock of the local community; a mocking ballad was written about his wife Grace and Tarrant, and one man was seen outside Stephen's house holding up a pair of ram's horns to signify a cuckold.[83] Another man who visited Tarrant Reeves after Stephen discovered the adultery asked him how many times he had lain with Grace. When Tarrant said just once, his visitor replied "that he was a good workman to get her with child by lying but once with her...and the said Tarrant laughed thereat." Pregnancy here is taken to be the consequence of Grace's sexual enjoyment, and it is implied that it was because Stephen could not match the sexual proficiency of his apprentice that he became a cuckold.[84]

Possessing the means to test men's sexual potency, and being aware of men's sensitivity regarding their performance, women were potentially capable of questioning manhood. In drama some women are portrayed as grasping this fact, and they use men's fear of mockery and loss of manhood as a means to gain power. When Troilus courts Cressida, her father warns him of women's ability to reward and take away a claim to manhood. He tells him not to woo with words, but

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[82] For a woman's flower usually symbolising the maidenhead see for example, Carroll, 'The Virgin Not', p.113-114; and Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, p.107.
[83] For mocking rhymes and horns see below, p.142-145.
[84] CA,Case 8136,(1669),Eee3, ff.603-606,612v-616v; Eee4, ff.5v,6r.

> give her deeds; but she'll
> bereave you o'th' deeds too, if she call your activity in
> question.[85]

Goneril in King Lear (c.1605), who openly compares her husband with other men exclaims, "Oh the difference of man and man", scorns her husband as a "Milk-liver'd man", and implies he is effeminate, "your manhood - mew!".[86] Other women in Renaissance drama; Beatrice in Much Ado, Lady Macbeth, and Beatrice in The Changeling are all able to influence men's behaviour when they express doubts about their manhood. Benedick, Macbeth and De Flores are all provoked into proving their manhood to show the falsity of the women's claims and to avoid the shame of their manhood being exposed as "melted into curtsies".[87]

In practice, adulterous women such as Grace Seagar were expected to make comparisons between the sexual performance of their husbands and lovers. One witness asked Grace "whether when she lay with him she found any difference between him the said Tarrant and her said husband".[88] Durham consistory court heard in January 1637 how when Richard Arckley of Burdon suspected his neighbour's wife of adultery he listened to sounds within her chamber by standing outside the window. He said he heard her lover boast to her "that he had then occupied her better than her husband had done for a year before".[89] When William Noble, a married man, solicited

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[85] Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida (c.1602), III,ii,52-54.
[86] Shakespeare, King Lear, (c.1605),IV,ii,26-68.
[87] Shakespeare, Much Ado, (1598),IV,i,291-307; Macbeth (1606), I,vii,35-83; Middleton and Rowley, The Changeling, (1622),II,ii,107-117; see also, Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour, p.245-252.
[88] CA,Case 8136, (1669),Eee3, f.605v.
[89] DDR.Box, no.414, (1636-7), Thomas Rawdon v. Christopher Dickon.

Ethelreda Baxter in Norfolk in the 1630's, he sought to impress her by boasting as he put his penis in her hand, that "his pintle was better than her husbands".[90]

We have evidence that women did indeed remark on the differences between their lovers. In a separation case heard in London in 1609 a servant reported how he had overheard Grace Ball say to her lover John Whallie that "no man living had done that to her which he the same Whallie had done".[91] In 1620 Mary Stringer recalled a conversation she had had with Agnes Swale in Osmotherley when they had been walking to a wedding. On their way they "began to talk of marriage matters" and Agnes said "that if she could choose she would have one that was a good doer". She said that she had had several lovers but "Thomas Twedye pleased her better than any that ever she dealt withall for that he occupied her three times in one night."[92] When Captain Charles Skelton sued his wife Dorothy for adultery in 1673 a nurse recalled a conversation she had with Dorothy the morning after she had been seen committing adultery. As she talked of her lover Dorothy was reported to have said, "of all the men that ever I lay with there was never any that meant so dear".[93]

In this context, widows who remarried could be extremely threatening to their new husbands because their experience gave any comparisons between lovers which they made a heightened credibility. Thus the journeyman Thomas Carter overheard Elizabeth Northmore tell her lover in her chamber after they had made love that "I love thee so dearly for 'tis more than anyone ever did besides my husband Lacke". Leonard Lacke was Elizabeth's previous husband; when she spoke these lines in 1673 she was

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[90] As cited in P. Crawford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500-1750', in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds), Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality (Cambridge,1994), p.97.
[91] Cited in Gowing, 'Women', p.195.
[92] DDR.V.11.f.74r.
[93] CA,Case 8350,(1673),Eee5, f.51r.

married to Edward Northmore.[94] When in 1673 Ellen Charnock brought a cruelty suit against her husband John, he defended his behaviour by claiming that her "scolding and brawling" and "abuses of him...would have provoked any person".[95] He recalled how on one occasion when he tried to reprimand her for her lewd behaviour she had declared that he was "no man, notwithstanding she was assured to the Contrary by having her hand in his Codpiece before the Marriage, and that had she not had two husbands before she should not have known what belonged to a man". Here we see a woman using her sexual experience to question the manhood of her new husband. Even though her explorations in his codpiece before marriage showed her that there was a penis, and that he was capable of an erection, John's lack of ability to satisfy her since marriage allowed Ellen to claim that he was "no man". From their courtship Ellen's seemingly unabashed appraisal of John's sexual assets established her as the dominant partner, her two previous marriages giving her the confidence to take the sexual initiative. She had told John that he was "too young to catch her", by which she indicated that his youth and therefore sexual inexperience meant that he would be unable to lay claim to her as his own. That this lack of sexual proficiency could also render a man effeminate is powerfully shown by Ellen's words to the servants that, "if she had not married him...he must have worn a Frock". Her words implied that she thought her husband so unproven in sex that unless she chose to teach him how to be a 'proper' man he would slip into the feminine state. It is hardly surprising that Ellen's public exposure of her dissatisfaction with her marriage left John a figure "laughed at and scorned abroad".[96]

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[94] CA,Case 6692,(1676),Eee6, ff.124v,128r.
[95] For more on this type of defence in cruelty cases see below, p.216-217.
[96] CA,Case 1813,(1673),Ee4, ff.118-122v,128v.

A wide range of sources from across the period show that in the seventeenth century "the honour of the husband dependeth on the wife".[97] It was a wife's sexual behaviour which most directly reflected on the honour of her husband, as the musician Whythorne lamented, "a man's honesty and credit doth depend in his wife's tail".[98] Male and female honour were so closely linked that if a wife committed adultery her husband's sexual reputation would immediately be subject to question. When a husband sees his wife in bed with another man in one popular tale, it is said that he has witnessed "the act of *his* dishonour".[99] When Thomas Earl of Stamford discovered that his wife had been adulterous in the 1680's, he bitterly told the court of Arches of how he,

> found her to be a lewd and adulterous person and had been false to his bed, and the same was public and notorious. And that by her course of living she had ruined him both in reputation and Estate [and he] did wish that he had never seen her face or never married her or that she were dead and so much he hath publicly declared.[100]

The dishonour that he claimed to have experienced was embodied in the frequently cited proverb, "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband : but she that maketh him ashamed is as corruption in his bones."[101]

3.5 The Dilemma of Control

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97 J. Dod and R. Cleaver, A Godly Forme of Householde Governement, (London,1614), sig.,L4.
98 Whythorne, p.26, as cited in Hodgkin, 'Thomas Whythorne', p.35-36.
99 R. Braithwait, Ar't asleepe Husband ?, (London,1640), p.49-50; the italics are my own.
100 CA,Case 8648,(1686),Ee6, f.110v.
101 Proverbs 12.4, cited in for example, Rich, The Excellency, p.29.

The key to prevention of cuckoldry remained sexual control. It was important for men within sexual relationships to establish a difference or 'separateness' from women in the bedroom if they were able to achieve that control. Here we are entering the realm of men's most intimate emotions, emotions which for the most part remain obscured from the historical record. But ballads and drama may provide us with clues as to how men thought that control could be obtained. In ballads such as 'The Hasty Bridegroom' the husband is shown to be anxious to "stoutly" make "bold with his own".[102] The sexual act is often described by using the terms of male trades and the male role in sex is one of assertive and forceful control; the pedlar will "pound spice", the taylor uses his "piercing Bodkin", the cooper will "hoop her Tubb" and stops her "lake-hole", and when the farmer is cuckolded his wife is "plough'd up".[103] The emphasis is placed on penetrative sex in which men establish their difference from women by their interest in claiming ownership rather than in expressing affection. Eric Partridge has found that the bawdy language in Shakespeare's plays displays a similar preoccupation with describing the male role in sex as phallic, assertive, and often aggressive. To cite some examples, women's vaginas are "cities" or "forts" to be "assailed", "besieged", "breached" and "occupied" by penises which are "darts", "lances", "stakes", and "swords".[104] In Restoration plays similar metaphors are employed to describe sex, particularly those with a hunting or military emphasis, in which the male role is one of "hunting for the kill" or "storming a siege".[105]

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[102] 'The Hasty Bridegroom', Roxburghe, vol.VII, part II, p.458-461.
[103] 'The Proud Pedlar', Roxburghe, vol.VII, part I, p.54; 'A New-Fashioned Marigold', Pepys, vol.IV, p.98; 'The Wheel-Wrights Huy-and-Cry', Pepys, (1693),vol.IV, p.115; ' A New Western Ballad', Pepys, vol.IV, p.125; H. Weinstein, 'Doing it by the Book: Representing Sex in Early Modern Popular Literature', unpublished paper.
[104] Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, pp.23,26-27,30-33; see also, Colman, The dramatic use of Bawdy, p.182-224.
[105] Turner, 'Rakes, Libertines', p.14-16.

Witnesses in the Durham church courts did refer to women as being "occupied" or "shaken" during sex, as well as women "occupying" men.[106] How far men in everyday conversations referred to and thought about sex in these terms is difficult to tell. However, some drama and poetry sources reveal another aspect of the male role in sex which is not apparent in the ballads. For whilst ballads describe male penetration, they say little about ejaculation. Self control may have been achievable during penetration, but drama and poetry not surprisingly show that during ejaculation the achievement of "a simultaneity of release and control" is difficult.[107] Instead, men are portrayed suffering from guilt after sex because they fear that by 'letting go' during sex they had exhibited a lack of self control which will allow women in future to dominate them. The act of sex itself becomes fearful because it is not rational, and therefore instead of confirming it, may even endanger manhood. After Othello has travelled through a storm to Cyprus where he is reunited with Desdemona, he forsees sex with his wife as a "tempest" which will unleash uncontrollable desires in him. Even within marriage sexual desire can cause men to lose their reason, Othello comes to realize that he "lov'd not wisely, but too well".[108] Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 illustrates the guilt and sadness that men could feel after sex,

> Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame
> Is lust in action, and, till action, lust
> Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
> Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
> Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight.[109]

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[106] See for example, DDR.V.8.f.78r; DDR.V.9.ff.6v,10r; DDR.V.11.f.362; DDR.V.11.ff.518v,519r; see also Gowing, 'Women', p.44.
[107] Danson, "The Catastrophe is a Nuptial", p.73.
[108] Othello, (c.1604),II,i,185; V,ii,345; for sex and the loss of reason see also, Lindley, The Trials of Frances Howard, p.102.
[109] J. Kerrigan (ed.), The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint (Harmondsworth,1986), p.141.

This expression of post-coital depression was by no means rare in Renaissance poetry, as Summers and Pebworth have shown. "Doing, a filthy pleasure is, and short: / And done, we straight repent us of the sport" wrote Ben Jonson.[110] When Troilus contemplates sex he asks,

> What will it be
> When that the wat'ry palate tastes indeed
> Love's thrice repured nectar? - death, I fear me,
> Swooning destruction, or some joy too fine,
> Too subtle-potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness,
> For the capacity of my ruder powers.
> I fear it much; and I do fear besides
> That I shall lose distinction in my joys. [111]

Death is the result of sex, and 'to die' is the metaphor Shakespeare uses to describe the male orgasm.[112] As Benedick tells Beatrice in Much Ado (1598) "I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes".[113] For Troilus, who fears that he will "lose distinction" in sex, male honour is seen as directly threatened by the act of copulation. It may seem little wonder that Othello is persuaded of Iago that,

> An honest man he is, and hates the slime
> That sticks on filthy deeds.[114]

Christian teaching may have helped men in reality to engender these feelings of guilt at sexual pleasure. Whilst post-Reformation conduct books acknowledged that sex, or

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110 Cited in C.J. Summers and T-L Pebworth, 'Introduction' in C.J. Summers and T-L Pebworth (eds), Renaissance Discourses of Desire (London,1993), p.2.
111 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida (c.1602), III,ii,18-25.
112 Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, p.93; Colman, The dramatic use of Bawdy, p.191.
113 Shakespeare, Much Ado about Nothing (1598), V,iii,78-79.
114 Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),V,ii,149-150; see E.A. Snow, 'Sexual Anxiety and the Male Order of Things in Othello', English Literary Renaissance, 10, (1980), pp.384-412.

"due benevolence" as it was termed, could be for mutual pleasure as well as procreation, they still urged moderation in love-making. Gouge warned men against "excess" in sex, William Whateley taught that too much sex "doth weaken the body, and shorten life", and Daniel Rogers believed that the marriage bed could be dishonoured by either refusal of sex by one party, or an "odious" excess of sex.[115] Calvin had even taught that the man who showed "no modesty or comeliness in conjugal intercourse" was committing adultery with his wife.[116] Ministers such as Samuel Hieron continued to teach men that there was an honourable as well as a dishonourable way to love their wives. Couples were to say the following prayer before going to bed, "Allay in us all sensual and brutish love...that we may in nothing dishonour this honourable state".[117] None of these writers considered how men were to resolve the central paradox of Puritan thinking concerning male gender roles: how was a man to be a patriarchal head of household as well as loving and benevolent husband? Only in fictional sources are the tensions which could arise between these contradictory roles of love and control explored in any detail, but even there, no easy solutions are proffered.

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[115] Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.224; W. Whateley, A Bride Bush, (London,1623), p.18-19; Rogers, Matrimoniall Honour, p.176-177; see also, T.N. Tentler, Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation (Princeton,1977), p.174-179; K.M. Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage' in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.), Marriage and Society (London,1981), p.58-78; A. Fletcher, 'The Protestant Idea of Marriage', in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds), Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain : Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson (Cambridge,1994), p.176-177; and J.G. Turner, One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton (Oxford,1987), p.73-80.

[116] J. Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, bk.2.chap.8, section 44, cited in S. Greenblatt, Renaissance Self -Fashioning (London,1984), p.248, see also p.249-252.

[117] S. Hieron, A Helpe Unto Devotion, 3rd edition, (London, 1611), p.411, as cited in Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, p.305, footnote 57; for further examples of writers who warned men against excessive sex see, Crawford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England', p.88-89.

The alternative to using sex as a means of control was for men to threaten, or actually employ, physical force in the household. Men's natural physical advantage over women was enhanced by their upbringing which encouraged them to nurture and develop their strength and courage. As boys their training marked their separateness from their sisters, "the breeding of men were after a different manner of ways from those of women", Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle observed.[118] Many boys grew up within a culture of violence, enduring more physical punishment than girls at home and at school.[119] In their leisure time the social elite engaged in hunting, fencing and running, while football and wrestling matches tested the courage and strength of those lower down the social scale.[120]

There can be little doubt that in this period many men used their strength to ensure household order. After all, until 1891 they had a legal right to do so and it seems likely that in the day to day running of married life as arguments broke out, men would have occasionally slapped or hit their wives.[121] Outsiders often proved reluctant to interfere in these types of quarrels. Around Whitsuntide 1663 a woman went to fetch the constable, James Shott of St Martins, Middlesex, to "part" her neighbours John and Cecily Bradley whose fighting she feared would worsen. But James refused to become involved, "because they were man and wife".[122]

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118 M. Cavendish, A true relation of my birth, breeding, and Life, (c.1630), 6, as cited in Pollock, "Teach her to live", p.238.
119 A. Fletcher, 'Prescription and Practice: Protestantism and the Upbringing of Children, 1560-1700', in D. Wood, (ed.), The Church and Childhood (Studies in Church History,31,1994), p.325-346.
120 See above, p.34; R.W. Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850 (Cambridge,1973), pp.34-40,42-43.
121 For the legal rights of husbands to beat their wives see, Phillips, Putting Asunder, p.324-331.
122 CA,Case 1127,(1663),Eee1, f.80v.

The right of husbands to maintain control by violence was by no means an uncontested issue. In fact, it was the subject of much current debate and concern. Whereas one proverb taught that "a woman, a spaniel, and a walnut tree, the more they're beaten the better they be", much popular literature, drama, and most Puritan advice books condemned wife beating.[123] In the Martin Parker ballad 'Well met, Neighbour' wife beating is described as behaviour to which only cowardly men resort,

> For those that will beat their wives,
> They dare not, with swords and staves,
> Meet men in the field for their lives.[124]

Whilst manhood may have rested on physical strength, ballads show wife beating as strength which is misdirected. The wife in another ballad by Martin Parker, 'Hold your Hands, Honest Men!' proudly describes the physical agility and strength which her husband can display when wrestling, leaping, running and vaulting. But all is not well because he cannot "rule his hands", and when angry or drunk he beats her. The message of this ballad is simple,

> if you desire to be held men complete,
> What ever you do, your wives do not beat.[125]

A man who beats his wife invites social comment, a shameful consequence since the household is meant to be under his sole jurisdiction. In a further ballad written by Martin Parker in the 1630's a wife is married to 'A He-Devil' who beats her, treats her like a slave, and spends her portion. She describes how,

> Heele with his girdle lace my skin,

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123 Tilley, A Dictionary of Proverbs, W644.
124 M.P.,'Well met, Neighbour', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.98-103.
125 M.P.,'Hold your Hands, Honest Men!', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.243-248.

though all the neighbours blame him.[126]

In both the ballad and the play Alice Arden tells her neighbour Master Greene stories of how her husband has beaten her to win his sympathy and support for her cause against her husband. In the play Alice says that,

> When he is at home, then have I froward looks,
> Hard words, and blows to mend the match withal.

Greene is "grieved" that "so fair a creature should be so abused", and resolves that he will be the man who "shall set you free from all this discontent."[127] Similarly, in the ballad version Alice relates to Greene how her husband,

> When he comes home he beats me, sides and head,
> That I do wish that one of us were dead,

at which Greene becomes "incensed" with anger.[128] Alice shows herself to be a "skilful manipulator of effect", for by playing the part of the abused wife she knows that she can win the support of her neighbours.[129]

That wife beating met with social disapproval is shown in other plays from across the period. Sparkish in The Country Wife (1675) is horrified when he finds the jealous Pinchwife threatening his wife with a sword.[130] Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife

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126 M.P.,'A He-Devil', Pepysian Garland, p.332-336; Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women, p.93-95.
127 Anon, Arden of Faversham, (c.1591), i,494-495,506-512.
128 'Arden of Faversham', Roxburghe, (1633), vol.VIII, part I-II, p.49-53.
129 F.E. Dolan, 'Home-Rebels and House-Traitors: Murderous Wives in Early Modern England', Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities, vol.4, no.1, (1992), p.25-27.
130 Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675), IV,iv,48-49.

(1697) shows that beating is ineffective as a corrective and may even provoke a wife to worse behaviour. When Lady Brute talks to her niece about her husband she says,

> he has used me so barbarously of late that I
> could almost resolve to play the downright wife - and
> cuckold him.[131]

Constant considers his chances of adultery with Lady Brute are higher because she is beaten by her husband. After he has seen her beaten by Sir John he declares that,

> a husband is scarce to be borne upon any terms,
> much less when he fights with his wife. Methinks she should
> e'en have cuckolded him upon the very spot, to show that
> after the battle she was master of the field.[132]

Finally, Lady Brute's niece Bellinda makes it quite clear that honourable men do not beat their wives when she announces that,

> if a man has
> the least spark of either honour or good nature, he can never
> use a woman ill that loves him and makes his fortune both. [133]

The reason why wife beating could be viewed as dishonourable was because when men were angry they risked losing their control over their reason. As it has been shown, reason was the other important component of manhood.[134] Othello strikes Desdemona after he has been tricked into believing he has seen her accepting the sexual advances of Cassio. The statesman, Lodovico, cannot believe his eyes when he sees Othello behave in this way. He asks,

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131 Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife (1697), I,i,89-91.
132 Ibid., IV,ii,27-30.
133 Ibid., V,ii,129-131.
134 See above p.63-65.

> Is this the noble Moor, whom our full senate
> Call all in all sufficient? This is the noble nature,
> Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
> The shot of accident, nor the dart of chance,
> Could neither graze, nor pierce?

He concludes that Othello has changed from a man who was so in control that "passion could not shake" to one who may be "light of brain", whose "wits" may not be safe.[135]

Many of the conduct book writers who condemned wife beating did so because it led men to lose their reason. One of the first objections that Heale raised in his tract against wife beating was that since men, unlike other beasts, had reason they should behave in a manner superior to beasts. He advised husbands that "wives are to be persuaded by reason, not compelled by authority".[136] Gouge instructed husbands never to "rebuke their wives when they are in a passion." For passion raised "a dark mist before the eyes of reason; which, while it remaineth, keepeth reason from giving any good direction."[137] The author of The Lawes Resolution of Women's Rights argued in 1631 that a husband could only exercise "reasonable correction" of his wife.[138] Whateley wrote that it was wisdom and prudence, synonyms for reason, which should ensure that a man's authority was "free from excess, and free from defect". When men became passionate with anger, Whateley warned, then they forget

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135 Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),IV,i,235-278.
136 W. Heale, An Apology for Women (Oxford,1609), pp.4,25.
137 Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.389.
138 T.E., The Lawes Resolution of Women's Rights (London,1631), p.128-129, as cited in Amussen, '"Being Stirred to Much Unquietness": Violence and Domestic Violence in Early Modern England', Journal of Women's History, vol.6, no.2, (1994), p.71.

"the use of thy reason".[139] Whateley was unusual amongst conduct book writers, for he believed that a husband could beat his wife, but only when faced with "the utmost extremities of unwifelike carriage". In other words, extreme disobedience or defiance could call for extreme measures.[140] Without reason such behaviour could be regarded as madness. In marriage a man and woman became one flesh, so who "but a frantic, furious, desperate wretch will beat himself" asked Gouge.[141] Henry Smith resolved that "these mad men which beat themselves should be sent to Bedlam till their madness be gone."[142] The Homily on marriage, recited in many churches, also taught that a man who beat his wife was like a madman.[143] If a man did beat his wife the consequence for his honour was made clear by Dod and Cleaver, "he which woundeth her, woundeth his own honour".[144] "God forbid that! For that is the greatest shame that can be, not so much to her that is beaten, but to him that doth the deed", taught another homily.[145] At the end of our period, Richard Steele in The Spectator condemned wife beating when he wrote;

> [C]an there be any thing more base, or serve to sink a Man so much below his own distinguishing Characteristic (I mean Reason)...as that of treating an helpless Creature with Unkindness, who has...deliver[ed] her Happiness in this World to his Care and Protection?[146]

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139 Whateley, A Bride Bush, pp.128-129,171, see also, pp.99-100,139.
140 Ibid., p.123; Fletcher, 'The Protestant idea of marriage', p.172-173.
141 Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.395.
142 Smith, A Preparative, p.73.
143 Church of England, Two Books of Homilies, p.510-511, as cited by M. MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth Century England (Cambridge,1981), p.102.
144 Dod and Cleaver, A Godly Forme, sig.,G2.
145 Sermons or homilies appointed to be read in churches in the time of queen Elizabeth (Liverpool,1799 edn), pp.323,328,330, cited in Ingram, Church Courts, p.144.
146 J. Addison and R. Steele, The Spectator, (ed.), D.F.Bond, (Oxford,1965), vol.2, no.236, p.417, cited in M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London', Gender and History, vol.4, no.1, (1992), p.10.

Whilst we know from court records that many men did not follow the instructions of Gouge, Smith, Heale, Dod and Cleaver, and Steele to never beat their wives, it is also apparent that there were stages at which a husband's violence would be condemned by other members of the household and the wider community. Discovering the levels or degrees of violence which were acceptable is very difficult given the inevitable variation in toleration levels between couples and within communities. But it is significant that wives were able to bring cruelty cases against their husbands and gather witnesses to support them when they could prove that violence had been in response to wifely behaviour which did not threaten a husband's honour. As this chapter has shown, the behaviour of a wife which most directly damaged her husband's honour was her adultery, and in this situation violence was probably widely tolerated. Adultery was in all likelihood the type of extreme disobedience to which Whateley was referring. As a later chapter will show, when witnesses were not convinced that a woman had been unchaste, they often condemned wife beating, and even labelled the behaviour as so lacking in reason that it was madness.[147] Servants and friends were appalled when husbands responded to relatively minor misdemeanours with severe violence. In the 1660's a witness for Cecily Bradley told the court of Arches how Cecily was beaten when she failed to prepare her husband's dinner on time.[148] A witness for Rachael Norcott told how Rachel's husband had been so dissatisfied with the butter on his pudding that he threw a stool at her with such force that she fell into a swoon.[149] Thomas Stoddard of Eltham, Kent, admitted his wife was chaste, but had provoked him to violence in 1684 because she was a poor cook who allowed "Lamb

147 See below, p.217-224.
148 CA,Case 1127,(1663),Eee1, f.83.
149 CA,Case 6659,(1666),Eee2, f.101.

and other good victuals" to spoil.[150] Finally, a servant of the Hubbards, who were wigmakers in St. Clement Danes London, recalled how the couple had had two main arguments which had led to violence. One of these had been caused when Grace Hubbard had not made her husband's shirts "as he would have them". It may have been after this occasion that another witness saw that Grace's mouth and lips had been so badly swollen by the beating that she could not even "get ale into her mouth".[151]

These were not beatings of a kind which restored household order by reminding subordinates of the importance of obedience. Instead, this marital violence was so excessive that it destroyed order, and with it a husband's honour. They did not demonstrate a man's control, but through their unreasonableness his lack of control. An honourable man did not maintain household control with unreasoned and indiscriminate violence.

3.6 The Honourable Householder

A man's reputation depended not only on his wife's behaviour but also upon that of his servants and children. It was important for him to show that he was in control of his entire household, for the home was a "little Commonwealth" in which men were to demonstrate their ability to rule.

It was insulting to men to suggest that they had lost control over their households. In the week before Whitsuntide 1620 John Yealdert approached Christopher Stoke, who was selling gloves on the Sand hill in Newcastle, and told Christopher that "he kept a thief" in his house. When Christopher demanded to know what he meant by this, John

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150 CA,Case 8770,(1684),Ee6, f.11.
151 CA,Case 4834,(1669),Eee3, ff.247v,299r.

said Christopher's apprentice William Raine stole from him. John slandered Christopher by implying that he was unaware that his own apprentice was dishonest. It could be argued that when William Raine appeared as plaintiff against John Yealdert in the defamation suit a few months later, Christopher was reasserting his control over William and demonstrating that he could manage his household. Just as it will be shown that wives fought defamation cases to clear their husband's names as well as their own, so an apprentice such as William Raine could find himself in court defending his master's reputation as well as his own.[152]

The alternative to sending a servant to court was simply to dismiss him or her from the household, thereby distancing a master's reputation from that of his servants. Thus when Alice Richardson was called whore in Michaelmas 1608 she lost her job tending cows in the parish of Chester le Street, and when a rumour began that Elizabeth Joplyn's father and brother had died of the pox, she was dismissed from the Moorecroft household in the city of Durham.[153] Similarly, George Fenwick of St Nicholas', Newcastle, who had served as an apprentice for six years, tried to persuade Margaret Sharpe who was servant in the same household not to tell anyone that they had committed fornication together, for fear of losing his opportunity to eventually qualify as a freeman.[154]

Household heads were expected to ensure that the sexual reputations of their servants were unblemished, and conduct book writers considered it an abuse of masterly control to become sexually involved with maidservants.[155] However, many masters did attempt the chastity of their servants even though the consequences of this adultery

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[152] DDR.V.11.f.106; for wives see below, p.126-130.
[153] DDR.V.9.ff.170v,171r; DDR.V.11.ff.179v,180.
[154] DDR.V.11.ff.478v-481,DDR.V.12.ff.4v,5; and for further discussion of this case see below, p.155.
[155] See for example, Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.661-2.

were so often shameful.[156] Margaret Pigg of Haltwhistle tolerated six years of marriage sharing her house with her husband's mistress who had been a maidservant and their illegitimate child before she sued for separation in 1610.[157] In 1621 during a quarrel between two wives in a bakehouse in Gilesgate, Durham, Elizabeth Wilson told Sibell Garrie that her husband was "a bastard getting Rascal" who got "bastards with his maids and makes his men take to them." Sibell and her husband brought separate defamation suits against Elizabeth in the case that followed. What was shameful was the accusation that Humfred Garrie was abusing both his female servants by having sex with them, and their partners by leaving to them the responsibility of bringing up his children.[158] That on the whole masters wished to avoid such slights on their reputations is shown in the records of the 1669 separation suit of Grace Hubbard for adultery and cruelty against her husband John of St. Clement Danes, Middlesex. One servant, Elizabeth Malthus, who acted as a witness for Grace, claimed that John repeatedly tried to seduce her when she worked in the Hubbard household. Elizabeth felt so troubled by her master's advances that she told her mother and then got a warrant from one Justice Godfrey for John to appear before the justice. She gained leave of her service, but not before she signed a note to John "not to trouble him for the uncivil offers or attempts of her chastity he had made, which he said would prejudice his credit and reputation". Even though John had never actually succeeded in committing adultery with Elizabeth, he felt that without signing the note she would have sufficient information to blackmail him or damage his reputation.[159]

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[156] See below, p.115-116.
[157] DDR.V.9.f.243.
[158] DDR.V.11.ff.174-176,178.
[159] CA,Case 4834,(1669),Eee3, ff.237-239; for other examples of masters being accused by their wives of having sex with servants see, CA,Case 6397,(1680),Eee6, ff.440-445,457,478-486; CA,Case 1544,(1697), ff.494-495,498-502; CA,Case 9240,(1699), Eee8, f.635r. For further examples of court cases in which servants claimed that masters sought sexual favours see Ingram, Church Courts, p.264-267; Quaife, Wanton Wenches, pp.127,154-155; and for a case study of the fate of one servant who dared to question her master's behaviour, Hindle, 'The shaming of Margaret Knowsley', p.391-419; for a fictional account of the consequences of

The example of the Seagar separation suit has shown how if a mistress committed adultery with a servant her husband was exposed to incessant mockery.[160] For this transgression showed that a husband was capable of controlling neither his wife nor servant and brought him into disrepute. Similarly, the Earl of Stamford's shame at the discovery of his wife's adultery was probably fuelled by the fact that her alleged lover was one of his servants.[161] When John Coleman, a disgruntled former servant of the Beaumont household started to spread gossip that he had committed adultery with his mistress, her husband Sir Thomas Beaumont launched a Star Chamber suit against him for defamation.[162] For relationships between masters or mistresses and servants directly threatened the social hierarchy which household heads were expected to maintain. Even when friendships were formed between mistresses and servants of the same gender they were subject to critical comment. When Elizabeth Bound accused her husband of adultery in 1693 she found herself subject to the most extravagant of claims by her husband. He and his witnesses told the court that she had shammed a maidenhead, went "abroad" late at night drinking and dressed in men's clothes; "Hats, Wigs, Breeches and the like", and infected her husband with the pox on her return. Witnesses claimed that such lewd behaviour was encouraged by Elizabeth's "intimacy" with her servant Hannah Hardcastle who accompanied her on her exploits. One witness commented on how their familiarity was "not becoming the Decency of a

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master/maidservant sexual relationships see S. Richardson, Pamela (London,1740); and for a general introduction into the status of servants see, J.J. Hecht, The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England (London,1956).

160 See above, p.83.

161 See above, p.87; for other examples of accusations against wives for committing adultery with servants see, CA,Case 9032,(1663),Ee1, f.600-601, Eee1, f.192; and CA, Case 8350,(1673),Ee4, f.287v-303r, Eee5, ff.48r-49r,65-67,72-73,300-303; see also Stone, Road to Divorce, p.271-2, and for examples of cases earlier in the century see Gowing, 'Women', p.142-143.

162 Cust, 'Honour and Politics', p.57-94.

Mistress to her Servant" and that Hannah was "not fit to be entertained in a civil family".[163]

Whilst masters and mistresses may have been encouraged to distance their reputations from that of those they employed, the comments of servants in separation suits show that the good name of their employers could also exert a considerable influence on their fortunes. If a master or mistress was caught in adultery and a separation suit followed there was a high chance that the marriage home would be broken up, meaning dismissal for the household servants. Anne Shawe was accused of being an adulterous and scolding wife in 1676. Her behaviour was portrayed as leading to the loss of her husband's customers in his tavern, and the alienation of her servants. Joyce Edwards described her mistress as a selfish woman who left the household with a bag of money, ignoring Joyce's demand as to how she was to secure her wages. Joyce became the spokesperson for all the household servants in the suit which followed when she bitterly complained that "hath it not been for the said Anne they might have lived well and comfortably and in good reputation."[164] Joyce's sufferings as a consequence of her mistresses' behaviour had made her a valuable and sympathetic witness for Richard Shawe, her master. In June 1696 Diana Alsop asked her mistress Anne, Countess of Macclesfield permission to leave her service as she feared the Countess' adulterous liaisons and pregnancy "would ruin" her, preventing her from getting another post. Diana's conversation with the Countess was one that was intended to inform her mistress that she was fully aware of her personal affairs, and as such was thinly disguised blackmail. Her strategy proved lucrative for the Countess promised her "twenty Guineas and five pounds a Year", and a new post at her sister's

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163 For shamming a maidenhead see above, p.75-76; CA,Case 1055,(1693),Eee7, f.713v-720v.
164 CA,Case 8209,(1676),Eee6, ff.64,65r.

household. As the witnesses to many adulterous meetings servants could become tremendously powerful as the arbiters of their masters' reputations.[165]

If a man had children it was also important for his reputation as an honourable householder that they learnt to respect and obey his wishes. "The obedience of children doth most prove the authority of parents, and is the surest evidence of the honour a child giveth to his parent" Gouge wrote.[166] Both Gouge and another conduct book writer Daniel Rogers reminded children of the commandment to "Honour thy father and mother".[167] Fathers were the guardians of their daughters' sexual reputations until marriage; their 'value' in the marriage market was dependant on their chastity. If a daughter had sex before marriage she could no longer be her father's exclusive property, and her damaged reputation reflected back on him. Hence one moralist commented that a fornicating man,

> wrongs the woman which he polluteth, and brings a perpetual disgrace upon her, and this disgrace redounds to her father, her friends, and the whole family.[168]

When Hero is accused of fornication in Much Ado (1598) her father laments how as she is no longer his he should "let her die" since she has "foul tainted flesh." He wishes in vain that he could detach himself from his daughter's dishonour and say that "this shame derives itself from unknown loins". But he knows that the slander against his daughter reflects on himself, "thou hast so wronged mine innocent child and me" he

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165 CA,Case 5938,(1697),Eee8, f.419v-420v; for the role of servants as witnesses to adultery see also, Stone, Road to Divorce, pp.30,211-215,220-223; for a scene in a drama which portrays servants gossiping about the sexual reputations of their masters and mistresses see, Southerne, The Wives' Excuse (1692), I,i.
166 Gouge, Of Domesticall, p.446.
167 Gouge, Of Domesticall, pp.432,452; Rogers, Matrimoniall Honour, p.88.
168 F. Mason, Two Sermons (London,1621), p.55, cited in Lindley, The Trials, p.173.

later tells Claudio.[169] Similarly, in Othello (c.1604) Desdemona's father Brabantio comes to see her secret marriage to Othello as a "gross revolt" against him which amounts to theft. Without her honour Brabantio says that Desdemona is "dead" to him.[170] A final example is from Ford's Love's Sacrifice (c.1632) in which Nibrassa disassociates himself from his daughter when she is known to have lost her virginity with Ferentes, a notorious womanizer, telling her "Get from me, strumpet, infamous whore, leprosy of my blood!"[171]

That fathers did see slanders against their daughters as slights on their good names can be seen in the defamation suit brought in 1619 by Alice Teasdell against John Nicholson of the parish of Wearmouth. John Nicholson had been spreading gossip that his friend William Daine had committed incontinence with Alice. Alice's father Thomas heard the rumours, and this led William to flee to a friend's house in Washington late one night "fearing to catch some harm of the said Thomas Teasdell". Knowing that Thomas was "offended" both John Nicholson and William Daine also visited the Teasdell household where William denied in front of Thomas that he had ever confessed to sleeping with his daughter. Although it was Alice who eventually brought a defamation case, the men's actions reveal that they expected it would be her father who would interpret their conversation as slanderous and offensive to him as well as his daughter. During their visit by addressing their denial to him they had attempted to appease Thomas, not his daughter. It is probable that Thomas Teasdell motivated and funded his daughter's law suit.[172]

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169 Shakespeare, Much Ado, (1598),IV,i,147,136,128; V,i,63.
170 Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),I,i,134;I,ii,62,95-99; I,iii,58-60.
171 Ford, Love's Sacrifice, (c.1632),III,i.
172 DDR.V.10B,ff.415v-416v,426v-427r,447; for more on the issue of female plaintiffs fighting cases in which their male relatives have a stake see below, p.120-134.

It is also worth noting that in the absence of the father the brother is portrayed in drama as assuming responsibility for his sister's honour. For example, both Shakespeare's Measure for Measure (c.1603) and Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603) tell stories of brothers who try to barter with their sister's honour. Ford's The Broken Heart (c.1629) is a tale of the tragedy and dishonour which follows when a brother marries his sister to a man she does not love. Whether husband, father or brother, the honour of the women a man associated with was closely tied to his own.

3.7 Conclusions

In the early modern period the chief gender characteristics which made men different from women were reason and physical strength. Honour was attached to approved gender behaviour, and for men this was behaviour which demonstrated their ability to rule over women. But all through a man's life his ability to gain honour was endangered by his relationships with women. Men in love during courtship risked losing their reason and self control. In marriage men could regain control through the use of physical force, but if beatings showed a lack of reason and were unrestrained, they could invite critical comment and be dishonourable. Equally, men could attempt to exert difference and control their wives through sexual assertiveness and initiative. The ultimate test of manhood was to satisfy a wife sexually. But by trying to achieve invariable and consistent control of the sexuality of others men had set themselves a near impossible task. Loss of female virginity and chastity was not visible unless pregnancy resulted, so male sexual honour could never be claimed with absolute confidence. Furthermore, male potency did not necessarily endure into old age. In practice, sexually it was sometimes men who were the "weaker" sex, and it was women who had the power to call their reputations into question.

CHAPTER FOUR: MEN, WOMEN AND SEXUAL DEFAMATION

4.1 The Double Sexual Standard

The preponderance of married female plaintiffs fighting sexual defamation suits in the church courts has led historians to neglect conducting an in-depth study of male sexual reputation.[1] Instead, it has been concluded that the church courts were "taken over for a particular endeavour...the discussion of women's sexual honour", and that they became a "women's court".[2] The types of non-sexual slanders with which men are assumed to have been most concerned were dealt with by the common law courts.[3] Whilst it is not disputed that there were a greater number of defamation suits brought by women in the church courts, this chapter argues that the explanations hitherto proffered for this phenomenon are inadequate, and that more can be learnt from defamation suits about male sexual honour than has been hitherto recognised. A close study of sexual insults directed against men and their wives reveals that sexual reputation was of crucial importance to most men.

Amussen has argued that there were a greater number of women fighting sexual defamation suits because, compared to men, they had more "limited roles in their families". Confined to the house, they were not as likely to face as wide a range of insult as their husbands.[4] However, whilst authors of prescriptive literature may have

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[1] 149 out of the 225 defamation cases studied from the Durham consistory court 1604-1637, 1662-1665 were brought by women; for excellent comparative statistical tables of numbers of female plaintiffs at London, Chichester and Wiltshire church courts see Gowing, 'Women',pp.11,27; see also Sharpe, Defamation, p.15 and Amussen, An Ordered Society p.101-2.

[2] Gowing, 'Women', p.24; Meldrum, 'A Women's Court', p.1-20.

[3] Ingram, Church Courts, p.297-298; Gowing, 'Women', p.77.

[4] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.103.

advised women to stay indoors and only have domestic concerns, we know that the reality of most women's lives necessitated their entry into the public sphere.[5] That there are so many examples in the church courts of women who are slandered outside the home whilst fulfilling an economic role such as going to the market, milking cows, or collecting coals, must allow us to cast doubt upon Amussen's argument.[6]

Another explanation which has been suggested for women's concern about their sexual reputation is that a 'double sexual standard' was in play during the seventeenth century in which sexual honesty was of greater importance for women than men. Adultery, Romei explained in 1598, was a greater crime for a woman because it "offendeth extremely against her own proper and principal virtue, which is honesty."[7] It is argued that as women's reputation depended solely on their chastity they were bound to display a greater sensitivity to sexual slander. The smaller number of sexual slanders directed against men is seen as indicative of an honour system which ascribed importance of sexual behaviour to women, non-sexual to men. The result was a world in which comparisons between male and female honour were impossible because they were so fundamentally different.[8]

There is evidence from a variety of sources showing that a double sexual standard was in operation during this period. The most severe act of the seventeenth century against sexual incontinence passed in 1650 embodied the double standard by defining adultery as a crime that could only be committed by women, if a married man had

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[5] Rowlands, The Bride, sigs.,D3,E2.
[6] For example see, DDR.V.10A.f.155v; DDR.V.11.f.362; DDR.V.8.f.188; DDR.V.9.ff.1,36-38; see also Gowing, 'Women', pp.48-49,51.
[7] Romei, The Courtiers Academie, p.97.
[8] K. Thomas, 'The Double Standard', Journal of the History of Ideas, 20,2, (1959), p.195-216; Ingram, Church Courts, p.302-303; Sharpe, Defamation, p.28; Gowing, 'Women', pp.42-43,65,68-69,74.

illicit sex it was labelled fornication.[9] Durham church court records reveal instances of wives discovering their husbands' adultery, and instead of directing their anger against them, they turn on their husbands' mistresses and call them whore.[10] In contemporary ballads wives of adulterous husbands also physically harm their female rivals. A slit nose was the sign of a whore. In 'Have among you! good Women' a Joyner's wife cuts the nose of her husband's lover to give her "a mark to be known". In 'Man's Felicity and Misery' David claims that if he even looks at another woman his wife will "claw her eyes out", and when two wives meet and discuss the marriage fortunes of their friends in 'Well met, Neighbour', one says that if she had an adulterous husband she would ensure that his lover "should go with no nose on her face." Gowing has found that women in London threatened to carry out these threats when they suspected their husbands of infidelity. Even if this violence was intended to bring husbands back to their wives, it would appear from these examples that whatever the circumstances, it was a woman who always got the blame and bore the brunt of others' anger.[11] Separation suits in the Restoration period show that women who dared to question their husband's behaviour risked being beaten. Hence the court of Arches heard in 1663 how when Cecily Bradley complained to her husband about his mistress widow Anne Cooke living with them, "telling him it was not fit she should be there under her nose against her will", he responded by beating her and turning her out the house.[12] At a Christmas Eve dinner in their home at Lindfield, Sussex in 1689 Thomas Holford talked of his mistress in front of his guests and offered his wife a crown to fetch her.

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[9] K. Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery: the Act of 1650 Reconsidered', in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds), Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History presented to Christopher Hill (Oxford,1978), p.261-262.
[10] See for example, DDR.V.9.152v; DDR.V.12.f.71-72; DDR.Box, no.414, (1636-7), Margaret Anderson v. Isabell Key; see also Gowing, 'Women', p.40-41.
[11] M.P., 'Have among you! good Women', Roxburghe, vol.1, p.435-440; M.P.,'Man's Felicity and Misery', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.183-188; M.P.,'Well met, Neighbour', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.98-103; Gowing, 'Language, power and the law', p.10; for examples of husbands who threaten to mark their wives as whores in a similar way see below p.214-215.
[12] CA,Case 1127,(1663),Eee1, ff.57,62v.

The meal ended violently when Mary Holford refused and said that if her husband's mistress was present she would burn her. The enraged Thomas proceeded "with great violence" to "thrust or swing her round the Room".[13] It would seem that these wives would have been wise to have taken the advice of the first Marquis of Halifax, who writing to his daughter concerning adultery, argued that "next to the danger of committing the fault yourself, the greatest is that of seeing it in your husband."[14]

Ballads which tell women to bear with their husband's faults and tolerate their adultery give us a picture of values and expectations.[15] Clues in these ballads that the physical act of adultery shamed a man in the same way that it did a woman are hard to find. Only two ballads describe how adultery destroys a man's good name, one says that whores take away "Purse, Person and Fame", the other says of adultery that "no credit comes on't".[16] The majority of ballads lay the blame of husband adultery on wicked whores who tempt men away from the marriage bed.[17]

However, conduct book writers taught that men could be shamed by illicit sex. Many claimed that sexual incontinence was equally sinful for both men and women, and even that the punishment should be greater for male adulterers than for females due to men's position of authority.[18] At one extreme, Richard Cooke, who published a sermon he gave in London in 1629, wrote that if whoremongers looked at how their reputation

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[13] CA,Case 4688,(1690),Eee7, f.119-121v.
[14] Miscellanies by the Right Noble Lord, The Late Marquis of Halifax (London,1700),17-18 cited in Thomas, 'The Double Standard', p.196.
[15] See for example, 'A Good Wife is a Portion every day', Roxburghe, (1673), vol.VI, part I-II, p.332-335; and 'The Maiden's Counsellor', Roxburghe, (1685-88), vol.IV, p.77-79.
[16] 'The Father's good Counsel to his Lascivious Son', Roxburghe, (1675),vol.VIII, part III, p.578-580; 'Nothing like to a good Wife', Pepys vol.IV, p.80.
[17] See for example, 'The Patient Wife betrayed', Euing, p.473.
[18] See for example, Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.221; The Court of good Counsell, sig.,C3; Heale lamented the injustice of the law which more frequently punished female adultresses than male adulterers see, An Apology for Women, p.26-27.

was affected by their behaviour they would find that their honour lay "not in the dust, but even in a dunghill".[19] Matthew Poole, in his commentary on the Bible argued that adultery was so damaging to a man, that whoever committed it, "is guilty of self-murder".[20]

If the ideas of a double standard were wholly accepted, this does not explain why some men were slandered as sexually incontinent, and why these men felt sufficiently concerned by the insult to bring defamation suits. For example, on Whitsunday 1608 Cuthbert Keadland of Newcastle was called a "whoremaster knave, and a Bastard getter knave" in front of his wife by Margaret Baite, and George Craggs was called a whoremonger according to one witness, a whoremaster according to another, by Christopher Simpson in Gilesgate at Durham in 1625.[21] In Durham court records the terms whoremaster and whoremonger were used interchangeably which may suggest that they did not differ significantly in meaning. It is worth noting, however that both terms gave men power and control over the women they had sex with: "whores are always possessed by men".[22] No distinction is made between men who have casual or long-term affairs. From the wording of these insults against men it can be seen that it was the consequences of illicit sex, rather than the act of sex or its discovery that caused shame. We have seen how Cuthbert Keadland was accused of getting bastards; George Craggs was also called a "beggarly rogue" who had "spent all his means upon whores and harlots".[23] By "keeping" whores men to their shame disrupt both household economy and order. George Cragg's wife is said to have whipped his

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[19] R. Cooke, A White Sheete, Or A Warning for Whoremongers (London,1629), p.22.
[20] M. Poole, Annotations upon the Holy Bible, (London,1683), Proverbs Chapter VI, v.32.
[21] DDR.V.9.67v; DDR.V.11.ff.437v,446v; for other examples of married men being accused directly of adultery, or being called whoremaster or whoremonger see, DDR.V.8.123r; DDR.V.11.f.174-176; DDR.V.12.f.162-165r; DDR.V.12.f.187.
[22] Gowing, 'Gender', p.15.
[23] DDR.V.9.f.67v; DDR.V.11.f.446v.

whores out of his house; in October 1609 it was heard how Margaret Maire had told her friends that because her husband kept four whores "she could lead no life with him"; and in July 1628, when Richard Robinson caught Ralph Allanson committing adultery, he angrily told him "it was more fit for him to be at home with his wife", and threatened to fetch her.[24]

The ballad called 'The Whoremonger's Conversion' summarizes well how men were shamed by having whores. A man describes how he was once a libertine but that his life led him to poverty, to the "surgeon's hands" with the pox, to being beaten after quarrels over a whore, and to "disgrace" with the constable and watch.[25] From the sixteenth century venereal disease, or "the pox", as it was popularly known, had swept across Europe as a terrifying new disease. Until the nineteenth century gonorrhoea and syphilis were not distinguished, but were seen as symptoms of the same disease.[26] The pox caused acute pain, afflicting men with burning scabs, cysts and swelling beginning with the penis and spreading to other parts of the body, sometimes even leading to death. It was seen as a direct consequence of extra-marital sex, acting as a sign of illicit sex which was as physically visible to the world as pregnancy was for women.[27] Even though in theory accusations of venereal disease should have formed the basis for common law suits, men did bring cases to the church courts after they were slandered as 'burnt' or 'pocky'; the insult acting as an "implicit allegation of past

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[24] DDR.V.9.f.153r; DDR.V.12.f.163.
[25] 'The Whoremonger's Conversion', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.122-126; for other ballads that warn men that illicit sex will be paid with the pox see, M.P., 'A Messe of Good Fellowes', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.143-148; 'The Westminster Wedding', Pepys, vol.IV, p.105; 'Nothing like to a good Wife', Pepys, vol.IV, p.80.
[26] R. Davenport-Hines, Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance (London,1990),p.24; C. Quetel, History of Syphilis (Oxford,1990).
[27] For the link between sex and death see above p.89-90; and Gibbons, 'Gender', p.38-42.

misconduct." [28] The pox was thought to be a punishment from God to teach men to be faithful to their wives: "men talk never of Continency, and Chastity until the time they see the razor in the surgeon's hands" one contemporary reflected.[29] It affected the very member which had sinned, striking at the core of manhood, often leaving men sexually incapacitated. Two men in the Durham courts faced the slander of their neighbours that they had "half" a prick "cut off" after contracting the disease, an insult which questioned their very claim to manhood. That one of these men, John Eastmas of Newcastle faced this taunt from a widow eight years after he had been afflicted with the pox, shows how a single act of illicit sex could haunt and shame a man for years to come.[30]

"Almost invariably, men sued for adultery, and women for cruelty. Only women are penalised for extra-marital sex; only men can be guilty of violence", Gowing has argued, based on her study of marriage separation cases in the London church courts 1572-1640.[31] In the Durham church courts of the early seventeenth century there were only four cases of separation, two brought by women, and two by men. The small numbers of these cases from this court do not allow for any firm conclusions to be made.[32] However, when we turn to Restoration church court evidence we find that male sexual inconstancy was subject to criticism by some wives and was invoked by women in separation from bed and board cases. In the court of Arches women brought 21 out of the 50 cases for separation on grounds of 'adultery' or 'adultery and

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[28] For the legal position see above, p.48, footnote 72;DDR.V.9.f.26,27r; DDR.V.9.f.163; DDR.V.10A.f.83a/v; Sharpe, Defamation, p.11.
[29] J. Cleland, Hero-Paideia, Or The Institution of a Young Noble Man (Oxford,1607),p.208.
[30] DDR.V.11.f.482 and DDR.V.12.ff.8,12; DDR.V.9.ff.163,185v; also see Gowing 'Women', p.51; Gowing, 'Gender', p.12-13; and Davenport-Hines, Sex, Death and Punishment,p.16-54.
[31] Gowing, 'Women', p.134.
[32] DDR.V.9.f.196; DDR.V.9.f.243; DDR.V.9.ff.249,250,257r; DDR.V.12.ff.283v,284,285r,288.

cruelty' before 1700. Perhaps what we are seeing here is a change of attitudes over time, and this may be reflected in the views expressed about the double standard on the Restoration stage.[33] It may also be that the special nature of the court of Arches as an appeal court meant that women were more likely to present separation suits for adultery in this court than in the lower courts. As women who dared to question their husband's sexual behaviour, they perhaps had less chance of a successful suit in the lower court and stood a greater probability of needing to pursue their suit further in an appeal court. However, there are features of the separation suits which were heard in this court which would seem to question the notion of a double standard. Firstly, some women who were accused of adultery by their husbands counter this accusation by also charging their husbands with inconstancy, surely an ineffective defence if the double standard was wholly accepted. These women draw attention to the shameful consequences of their husbands' illicit behaviour. For example, Martha Milner, married to John, an upholsterer in St. Clement Danes, Middlesex, responded to her husband's allegations of adultery in 1669 by claiming that his infidelities had led to him infecting her with the pox. At the other end of the social scale, the Countess of Stamford defended herself in the separation suit brought by the Earl by arguing that it was his liaisons with "lewd women" that had driven him into debt. She even said that her husband had an affair with one of his witnesses in the case, Elizabeth Poole, who had tried to "destroy" her baby when she became pregnant by him. The statements of these women openly defied the notion of a double standard of sexual behaviour.[34]

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[33] See below, p.116-118

[34] See CA,Case 6292,(1669),Ee3, f.483r; CA,Case 8648,(1686),Ee6, ff.98v,102v-103r; see also CA,Case 9005,(1663),Ee1, f.356; for cases in which the defendants' witnesses claim that the husband had committed adultery see CA,Case 8350,(1673),Eee5, ff.461-464r,467r; and CA,Case 9032,(1663),Eee1, f.192r.

Secondly, there is further evidence in the cases women brought on grounds of cruelty that adultery of husbands led to a shameful disruption of household order. The pattern of consequences of female infidelity, which were popularly believed to include scolding and even violence, were echoed by those anticipated as following from male adultery.[35] For example, Mary Jones prosecuted her husband George in Cheshire in 1665 after he beat her. She showed the court how household relations had been disrupted after Dorothy Walklate had become her husband's mistress and moved into the house. Mary's story of her husband's adultery clearly shows how her rightful position was usurped by this intruder. Dorothy would bring George a posset in bed, feed it to him, and then climb in beside him. Mary said George had "never put of[f] his clothes to lie with her since Dorothy Walklate came to live in the house". In these circumstances, George's beating and expulsion of his wife from the house appear as a further aspect of his generally abusive and disruptive behaviour.[36] The witnesses who spoke for Mary Morgan of Aberhasesp, Montgomeryshire in her separation suit for cruelty against her husband Matthew in 1680 emphasized how Matthew's cruelty to his wife took place in the context of his adultery with at least three servants and a married woman, Katherine Jones. Matthew's adulterous relationships had also led to Mary's role within the household being displaced; Katherine Jones commanded the servants who were in turn disrespectful to Mary. It is said that Katherine had "so great a power over him the said Mr Morgan" that if anyone had a request for Matthew, they would first seek Katherine's favour. The story which the witnesses create is one of a husband whose adultery has led to shameful consequences; he is under the 'power' of his mistress who has taken over the control of his household, and he has abused his position as a master, with three maids leaving his house pregnant, and another fleeing from his unwelcome advances. In these circumstances a husband violently beating his

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[35] For scolding and violent wives see below, p.137-142.

[36] Walker, 'Crime,Gender and Social Order in Early Modern Cheshire', p.92.

wife can be presented as one more indication of a man who has lost control.[37] The blame for disorderly male conduct in these cases may still be attributed as originating with a woman, for example in the Holford case of 1690 one witness remarked how it was "customary" for Thomas to cruelly slander his wife when he came home from his mistresses' house, and Cecily Bradley in 1663 complained how it was her husband's mistress who used to "instigate her husband against her".[38] But by indicating that their husband's behaviour was influenced by another woman, these wives were showing how men with mistresses had lost self-control, and thus how adultery could easily become shameful to a man.[39] The result of extra-marital sex for both men and women was shame; but the cause of that shame differed. For men it could be caused by loss of self control, and more importantly household control; for women it was always the result of compromised sexual chastity.

A survey of the drama of the period reveals that objections to the double standard were voiced by female characters on the stage. Emilia in Othello (1604) points out that, like men, women have frailities, affections and desires, and that if men treat them ill by pouring "our treasures into peevish laps", then they should expect similar behaviour in return. She warns,

> Then let them use us well: else let them know,
> The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.[40]

These ideas are expressed in Restoration plays with even greater force. Honour codes which insist on sexual chastity are portrayed as denying women their natural desires, and imprisoning them within loveless marriages. Lucy, Alithea's maid in Wycherley's

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[37] CA,Case 6397,(1680),Eee6, ff.440-445r,457,478-486.
[38] CA,Case 4688,(1690),Eee7, f.121v-122v; CA,Case 1127,(1663),Eee1, f.62v.
[39] For more on mistresses having control over men see below, p.194-195.
[40] Shakespeare, Othello (c.1604), IV,iii,86-103.

The Country Wife (1675) regards honour as a "disease in the head" which robs women of their pleasure,

> Men lose their lives by it; women what's dearer to 'em, their love, the life of life.[41]

When Lady Cockwood in She Would if She Could (1667/8) is so cautious of her honour that she is foiled once more in her attempt to make love to Courtall she realizes,

> My over-tenderness of my honour has blasted all my hopes of happiness.[42]

Remaining chaste within marriage is so undesirable and "so condemned" by men of "every age", that "they have thrown it amongst the women to scrabble for", Constant declares in Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife (1697). The argument that fidelity should be reciprocal is voiced by Lovemore in Southerne's The Wives' Excuse (1692). He cannot believe that a woman,

> can be contented to have her Honour, much longer than her Fortune in the possession of a Man, who has no fund of his own, to answer in security for either.
> Thus, who a Married Woman's Love wou'd win,
> Shou'd with the Husband's failings first begin;
> Make him but in the fault, and you shall find
> A Good Excuse will make most Women kind.[43]

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[41] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),IV,i,32,34-36.
[42] Etherege, She Would if She Could, (1667/8), III,i,171-172.
[43] Southerne, The Wives' Excuse (1692), I,iii,61-67; see also III,ii,32-34 and IV,i,129-131; for a discussion of these themes see also Turner 'Rakes,Libertines', p.43-53.

When in The Provoked Wife Lady Brute asks Constant why men insist upon chastity for women he explains,

> We recommend it to our wives, madam, because we would keep 'em to ourselves; and to our daughters, because we would dispose of 'em to others. [44]

The motivation for the double standard is revealed as entirely selfish on men's part, it is something that they themselves cannot achieve, and is insisted upon purely so that they can claim sexual control over their wives. Although men could be shamed by the consequences of illicit sex, adultery would remain a greater crime for women than men whilst a wife's adultery "also staineth the honour of her husband".[45] A woman's chastity belonged to her husband, "a woman hath no power of her own body, but her husband", so by committing adultery, she did "the more wrong to give away that thing which is another body's without the owner's license."[46] Both in reality and on the stage women objected to the double standard, but it would remain in place as long as male honour rested on female chastity.

It is interesting that men even made a distinction between single and double adultery. Romei stated that a married man who committed adultery with an unmarried woman,

> although he be worthy of some blame, yet looseth not his honour, because he injureth none but his own wife,

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[44] Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife (1697), III,i,354-362.
[45] Romei, The Courtiers Academie, p.97.
[46] J.L. Vives, A very frutefull and pleasant boke called the Instructio[n] of a Christen woma[n], trans. T.Hyrde (London,1541),sig.66r, cited in N.A. Gutierrez, 'The Irresolution of Melodrama: The Meaning of Adultery in A Woman Killed with Kindness', Exemplaria, 1.2. (1989), p.271.

on the other hand, double adultery was committed when,

> married or unbound, he useth the company of a woman married. And this man remaineth dishonoured, because he sinneth extremely against the virtue of Temperance, and faileth in justice, he being a grievous injurer or destroyer of another man's honour.[47]

Double adultery was the more serious offence because it harmed another man's honour.[48] Yet for some it was the thrill of knowing that adultery with a married woman damaged her husband which acted as the spur to action,

> Adultery is nothing else but the Curiosity of discovering another Man's secret Pleasures, and the Itch of knowing what is hidden; and Curiosity is (as it were) a Rape and Violence Committed upon other People's Privacies.[49]

Despite being open to debate, the double standard remained deeply and securely embedded within the early modern male psyche, and remained crucial to the sexual politics of the period. But the double sexual standard is not wholly satisfactory as an explanation for the ratio of women to men fighting sexual defamation suits in the church courts. We know that control of women's chastity was of fundamental importance to men's reputations, and the previous chapter has shown that cuckold was the worst sexual insult which could be directed against men. But in the Durham consistory court in the early seventeenth century out of 76 defamation cases with a male plaintiff, only three were brought by men who had been called cuckold.[50] The small number of suits fought over the insult of cuckold must instead be seen as

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[47] Romei, The Courtiers Academie, p.96.
[48] See also Ingram, Church Courts, p.239; Thomas 'Puritans and Adultery', p.259-260.
[49] J. Burgh, The Gentleman's Library: Containing Rules for Conduct in all Parts of Life, (London,1715),p.336, as cited in Spacks, Gossip, p.32.
[50] DDR.V.8.f.191; DDR.V.11.ff.69v,70r; DDR.Box, no.414,(1633-34), John Colthird v. Roger Story; the insult of cuckold was used in another four cases but the suits were brought either by their wives or by the husband and the wife see below p.130.

indicative of its power as an insult. Most men who were called cuckold would not have dared to have gone to the courts for fear that the insult would have reached an even wider audience. Thus there can be no simple correlation made between concern for sexual reputation and the number of suits being fought in the church courts.

4.2 The Circumstances of Sexual Slander

Gowing claims from her study of defamation cases in the London church courts that women used insults such as whore "towards their own ends", and were themselves "the agents of its definition".[51] We find from defamation suits that women did indeed frequently use the insults of whoredom. But whilst women may have shaped the words they used according to personal style or preference and to suit individual circumstances, the core meaning of the words remained one that had been created by men to fit a male political agenda. It was men who desired to make women their property and who defined what it meant to be chaste and what to be a whore. If women used insults to fulfil their own purposes, and to meet their own ends, it does not seem logical that they would have adopted a word such as 'whore', a word which stemmed from an ideology which was designed to restrict and confine women's behaviour. As this section will show, when women did use sexual slander it was often in circumstances which had little to do with their opponents' sexual reputation. Furthermore, when wives came to court to defend their names after sexual insult, their motivation was often at least partly inspired by a desire to defend their husband's good name as well as their own.

In the study of church courts historians have begun to explore why men and women in the seventeenth century brought defamation suits. It has been observed that suits

[51] Gowing, 'Language, power and the law', pp.36,30.

brought after sexual slander were often concerned with issues which were in fact not sexual, but rather the culmination of long-term 'neighbourhood' disputes.[52] Gowing has richly illustrated this point, arguing that the living conditions of seventeenth-century London shaped the types of conflicts which arose.[53] In the north, the Durham diocese included both urban and rural areas; from the streets of Newcastle and Durham city, to the mining and farming communities outside these urban centres. In the surviving church court records there is certainly evidence of men and women calling each other 'cuckold' or 'whore' during disputes which had originally been concerned with non-sexual matters. For example, in 1633 two skippers on the Tyne argued over space for their keels, with one eventually calling the other cuckold; and in Lent 1618 Christopher Robinson was accused of having a "hedge whore" after he served a citation on Isabell Snawball and her son.[54] Women could also face sexual slander during quarrels with their neighbours over non-sexual matters: when Alice Fetherston and Elizabeth Waister argued over some bread in the market at Newcastle in midsummer 1608 ultimately they both used sexual slander, Alice was called a slut, Elizabeth a whore.[55] These types of quarrels between neighbours tended to be precipitated over issues of debt repayment or property disputes. Collecting debts was obviously a hazardous business when an inability to repay what was owed could lead to a questioning of a man's 'credit' in future transactions. Tensions could run high. When Richard Jackson asked James Bellamy for the money he owed him for a horse in the street at Brancepeth in July 1629, James refused and called Richard "whoremaster and knave saying that he kept...Anne Maison, and did commit the crime of Adultery

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[52] Ingram, Church Courts, p.315-316; Sharpe, Defamation, p.22-23; Gowing, 'Women', pp.24,61-62,64,85,91-93,211.
[53] Gowing, 'Women', p.11-16.
[54] DDR.Box, no.414, (1633-34), John Colthird v. Richard Story; DDR.V.10B.ff.358,359r.
[55] DDR.V.9.ff.124r,133v,136,144r; for a brief discussion of this case see Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship', p.25-26.

with her."[56] There was also a great sensitivity about ownership of property and about household space. Thus when Jane Berryman of St. Andrew's, Auckland told Simon Ridley that she had seen him put two of his horses to graze on James Anderson's ground, he called her "an arrant whore and thief in so saying".[57] When houses were often closely packed together many quarrels also broke out over household noise, leaking drains, and broken fences and walls.[58]

Why was sexual slander invoked during these quarrels? For those who witnessed these arguments the sexual slander could represent just one more insult in a long line of obscenities. Thus Thomas Wamesley who heard the quarrel between the skippers John Colthird and Roger Story said later in court that "he gave no regard" to the quarrel for he thought that "it would never come in question".[59] Thomas saw the argument for what it was: a dispute over boat space at the quay, not sexual reputation. But sexual words such as 'cuckold' and 'whore' were used during disputes, even when they were unrelated to the argument in question, because of their power. They marked the height or culmination of a quarrel which no other insult could surmount. They represented the most direct and effective type of insult because sexual reputation was so important to both men and women. The 'truth' of the slander for those who were insulted was irrelevant. A sexual slander demanded a response - hence John Colthird took Roger Story to court to clear his name - a reaction which either would have settled the quarrel or provoked further dispute.

Sharpe argues from Yorkshire evidence that the "initiation of a suit for defamation might be interpreted as the first step towards bringing neighbourly tensions to a close".

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[56] DDR.V.12.f.146; for the meaning of credit see above, p.56-57.
[57] DDR.V.10A.f.88.
[58] See for example, DDR.V.12.ff.87v,88r,89r; DDR.V.9.f.165v; DDR.V.9.f.233; DDR.V.8.ff.122v,123.
[59] DDR.Box, no.414,(1633-34), John Colthird v. Roger Story.

By contrast, Gowing using London records believes that, "taking insult to court was a powerful way of continuing such disputes."[60] In the Durham diocese there is evidence that bringing a defamation suit could provoke a whole series of related cases, for example when John Todd's suit at the court of common pleas in London led to the arrest of his neighbour John Weighell of Osmotherley, Weighell's slander of Todd precipitated a string of defamation suits concerning sexual slander between members of the two families.[61] However, the incidence of disputes like that of the Todd and Weighell's was comparatively rare. It may be that on the whole going to the church courts in north-east England helped to resolve disputes rather than to provoke them.

Even if sexual slander in the context of a neighbourhood dispute can be explained, this leaves the question as to why women more frequently than men launched defamation suits. By looking at the circumstances in which women were slandered we may gain a clearer picture as to why they became plaintiffs in the church courts. One reason may have been that married women were slandered by 'association' with their husbands. That is, women found themselves facing the insults of those who were angry with their husbands. For example, in 1624 Anne Swalwell was slandered as an "old bawd" and a "whore" by Grace Rutlidge because Grace believed that Anne's husband had caused the king's licence to be served on her husband.[62] In March 1618 when Mary Dobson fell arguing with Anthony Garnett over some flax they were weighing together she accused him of connycatching her and then turned on Jane Garnett, Anthony's wife, and called her "connecatch quean drunken bitch, and said she thought the devil was in her, she the said Jane being then great with child."[63] When Cuthbert Jackson started

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[60] J.A. Sharpe, "Such Disagreement betwyx Neighbours",p.178; Gowing, 'Women', p.64, see also p.91-93.
[61] DDR.V.9.ff.163-165,185v,186r,187v,188r,233.
[62] DDR.V.11.ff.238v,239r.
[63] DDR.V.10B.ff.372v,373; Anthony and his wife brought separate suits against Marie Dobson. Connycatch means to cheat, OED.

arguing about some pigs owned by John Chamber which Cuthbert claimed had strayed onto his ground in Gateside, a witness observed how the dispute passed "from less to more" when Cuthbert then proceeded to call John's wife a whore and cheat.[64] Edith Cratchley was prosecuted as a whore on the basis of slander in Wiltshire in 1619. As Ingram has recognised, she was in fact a "victim of local hostility against her husband" who was suspected amongst other crimes of fathering a bastard and sheepstealing.[65] Another example is that of Margaret Postgate who in May 1620 was called whore by Elizabeth Wales after her husband Thomas Postgate went to collect debts from Elizabeth in Chester le Street, Durham.[66] None of these arguments had started over sex, but each of these women had become victims of sexual slander because others had been disgruntled with their husbands' business dealings. Perhaps slandering a man's wife was an easier option than facing up to the man himself. But also, as we will see, by calling a wife whore the slanderer was insulting the husband by labelling him a cuckold.[67]

There are other cases in which women are caught in the crossfire of an argument between men and are slandered. For example, the Durham consistory court heard in March 1634 how Alice Coleman had sat between Amor Patterson and Robert Dawson at a wedding dinner at Newbiggin. When the two men, who had been drinking, started to quarrel Alice intervened "and laboured to pacify them". Amor then turned to Alice and called her a "scurvy base idle queane". When Amor's wife later scolded her husband for treating Alice in this way he was reported to have said "what care I for her", and repeated the slander.[68] Similarly, when William Chapman and Roger Harper

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[64] DDR.V.11.f.116.
[65] Ingram, Church Courts, p.256.
[66] DDR.V.11.ff.68,100.
[67] See below, p.125-127.
[68] DDR.Box, no.414,(1633-34), Alice Coleman v. Amor Patterson.

started to fight in the doorway of John Fletcher's house in South Shields, and Isabell Chapman appeared and tried to help her husband, she was called "arrant whore" by Roger, thrown to the ground, and accused of being "drunk with his means."[69] A fight broke out in the street at Bedlington when the constable, William Watson tried to put William Skipsey in the stocks. Jane Skipsey rushed to the scene and pulled Watson by the jerkin to try and prevent him from doing her husband any further harm. Watson then turned on Jane and called her an "arrant pockie whore".[70] When Christopher Simpson and George Craggs started quarrelling in Gilesgate at Durham and Edeth, wife of Christopher, asked George "what reason he had to use her husband so", she was also called a whore.[71] It is women who are the plaintiffs in all of the defamation suits which followed, but the circumstances in which they were slandered reveal little about female sexual reputation, much about male behaviour if not reputation. It is often when women intervene in male quarrels, or try to defend their husband's reputations that they are slandered. There is a sense again in which women are the easy victims of slander, of a society in which men could let their anger out upon women because women did not have the strength of words or fists to fight back. Of course, these women could take the men who insulted them to court, but suits such as those of Isabell Chapman, Jane Skipsey and Edeth Simpson did not just serve these women's interests. Arguably, by bringing the cases to court they were also gaining a wider audience for the original quarrel involving their husbands.

The most crucial factor which determined whether a woman went to court after she was called whore was if her husband was present when she was slandered, or if he later heard through gossip that she was labelled whore. For calling a wife whore was

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[69] DDR.Box , no.414,(1636-7), Isabell Chapman v. Roger Harper.
[70] DDR.V.11.f.66-67r.
[71] DDR.V.11.ff.425v,426,427; for other suits between the Craggs and the Simpsons which followed see DDR.V.11.ff.435-438r,446v-447r.

an effective insult because it represented a two-pronged attack aimed at the wife and the husband: if a married woman was a whore then her husband was a cuckold. The insult 'whore' told a husband that he had lost sexual control over his wife. Hence men were very sensitive to gossip about their wives' behaviour. Durham consistory court heard in November 1604 how George Cuthbert of Usworth suspected that Elizabeth Philipe had been gossiping about his wife's relationship with one Robert White. He angrily confronted Elizabeth's husband in the street. An argument broke out between the two men. It was Winfried Cuthbert who had been called whore, and Elizabeth Philipe who had spread the gossip, but it appears that it was their husbands who found these facts disturbing. George clearly believed that the gossip that Robert White "occupieth" his wife "up the house and down" was affecting his reputation. By attacking the husband of the gossiper he was implying that Elizabeth's husband should have been able to control his wife's talk. He rose to the challenge of the argument by ordering his wife to come before them. Perhaps unsurprisingly Elizabeth tried to avoid the charge of gossipmonger by blaming the spread of gossip upon her cousin. Since her husband was unable to stop the flow of gossip informally, Winifried Cuthbert brought a defamation suit against Elizabeth, an action which must have served to abate the worry and anger of her husband.[72]

That slanderers intended the insult of 'whore' to have the dual purpose of affecting both husband and wife is shown by the fact that the slander of 'whore' was sometimes deliberately addressed to, or directed at, the husband. His cuckoldry was often the wounding point at issue. For example, just before Christmas 1616 John Casson told William Taler that his wife Jane was "an abominable whore"; in around 1619 at Chester Roger Colson told John Sander that Isabell Sander "had nothing to do when her husband was at London but go up and down a whoring"; and Ralph Eglesfield was

[72] DDR.V.8.f.5r.

told in May 1629 that his wife "had laid six weeks together with another wives' husband". In all three cases the wives of the husbands mentioned became plaintiffs in the defamation suits which followed.[73] There are many more examples of defamation cases from across the period which were brought by women and which tell us that the husband was present when his wife was called whore.[74] Sometimes the slanderer even called for the husband's attention. One night in Newcastle between Michaelmas and Martinmas 1627 Elizabeth Bateman was so angered by her neighbour Katherine Bindlosse's intrusion into her house that she went to the door of the Bindlosse's house and called for George Bindlosse before shouting to him "thou art an honest man but thy wife...is both a thief and a whore".[75] Slanderers such as Elizabeth Bateman drew the husband's notice to the insult because they knew that male sexual reputation rested on female chastity.

That Elizabeth Bateman contrasted the honesty of George Bindlosse with the dishonesty of his wife was a deliberate ploy to cause discord between the couple. Elizabeth implied that George had been 'honest' in the sense that he had been innocent of Katherine's behaviour, not that his own honesty or reputation would remain unaffected by his wife's behaviour.[76] There is ample evidence from other cases that once a husband heard that his wife had been called a whore discord usually followed. For example on Easter Tuesday 1619 Agnes Hall told her neighbours how Barbara Archbald had "got a new gown and a petticoat for lying one night with Mr. Sanderson." The result of this slander was that it "bred great dissension betwixt her

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[73] DDR.V.10B.f.261; DDR.V.11.ff.162,170; DDR.V.12.ff.163v,164r.
[74] See for example, DDR.V.9.f.234; DDR.V.10A.ff.65v,66a,67r; DDR.V.11.ff.57v,58; DDR.V.11.ff.66,67r; DDR.V.11.ff.93,94; DDR.V.11.f.116; DDR.V.11.ff.348v,349,350r,357v; DDR.V.12.ff.72v,73r,75; DDR.Box, no.414,(1633-34), Ellenor Partridge v. Edward Hunter.
[75] DDR.V.12.ff.87v,88,89r.
[76] For another example of a slanderer contrasting an "honest man" with his wife who is a whore see, DDR.V.12.ff.244,255v,256r.

the said Barbara and her husband".[77] Jane Romwhate caused much trouble between several wives and their husbands by her gossip in Heighington at the turn of the century. She provoked "much discontent" between Janet Morecock and her husband when she told John Morecock that his wife did "fully love another man besides her husband". When Jane had words with Ralph Wren she "used such speeches" that she caused Ralph to beat his wife, "moved great anger between them", and "caused them to part for a time." Finally, when she called Helen Heighington a "frantic bedliner and barsot gentlewoman" at a churching dinner at Lammas 1609 she caused "much disagreement" between Helen and her husband. It was Helen who brought the defamation case against Jane in which four female witnesses told the court of her disruptive behaviour.[78] Jane was known to be an "angry woman" and a "very turbulent and troublesome neighbour" who had so abused her own husband that her next neighbour was "carried upon a stang about the town". Her behaviour had become so objectionable and such a public nuisance that she had been singled out for this punishment as a scold.[79] Her own mother was "so ashamed and grieved at her ill using therein as that she is loth to come in her company". Despite this common knowledge about Jane the husbands of Heighington still reacted angrily against their wives when Jane questioned their honesty, and her unscrupulous use of insult resulted in the disruption of a whole community. The 'truth' of her talk does not seem to have concerned these husbands. What mattered was that her words called into question their reputation as well as their wives'. It is clear from their response that the insult 'whore' affected men as well as women.

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[77] DDR.V.10B.ff.440,441r,DDR.V.11.ff.50r,80,81r,89; in volume 11 from f.80 Agnes is spelt as Ann.
[78] DDR.V.9.ff.174,190; bedliner was probably an insult derived from Bedlam and was used to indicate madness; barsot is presumably a derivation of sot to mean drunk.
[79] To ride the stang was a northern custom or variant of charivari in which a man was mounted astride a pole borne on the shoulders of two men, and carried through the streets for derision, OED ; Ingram 'Ridings, Rough Music', p.82; that it was a history of troublesome or otherwise objectionable behaviour which could lead to ridings see Ingram, "'Scolding Women Cucked or Washed"', p.67-69.

In 1607 the writer of the advice book The Court of good counsell, which set out "how a man should choose a good wife from bad", warned that it was the experience of many women that "if abroad they by chance receive any injury, then...[they] are sure to go to the wrack for it when they come home".[80] As later chapters will show, if a woman was called whore, or her husband a cuckold, marital discord was almost bound to follow in which a woman would "go to the wrack".[81] Sometimes the damage which had occurred to a marriage as a result of slander was spelled out to the court. When Gregory Hutchinson spread rumours that Isabelle Moore was committing adultery with James Noble, her husband became "much discontented with her", so that Gregory had to make a public apology to Isabelle.[82] When Richard Widdowes called Francis Frissell "Cuckold, Cuckoldly Knave and Cuckoldly Curr" in August 1607, it was noted by two witnesses that an "evil argument [had] thereby grown betwixt him and his wife."[83] Going to court to fight a defamation suit was one way that a wife might hope to appease her husband. Recognition that husbands were often behind married women's legal actions is seen in the records of another of Durham's church courts, the Bishop of Durham's Halmote Court. When a wife such as Elizabeth Harrison gave testimony in 1653 regarding a suit over copyhold land, for example, it was noted that she was "examined alone and not compelled by force or through fear of her said husband but of her own voluntary and free will". In this church court there was clearly suspicion that only "force" or "fear" would inspire a woman to turn to the law.[84] After sexual slander against his wife or directly against himself, a husband who sent his wife to the consistory court was giving a sign to his neighbours that he had reassumed

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[80] The Court of good counsell, sig.,C2.
[81] See below, chapters five and seven.
[82] DDR.V.8.f.77v; for further discussion of this case see below, p.202.
[83] DDR.V.9.f.47; a curr is another word for a dog, OED.
[84] Halmote Court Book, I, no.81, f.393v.

control over his household. In the Durham church court there were three cases in this period in which a man was called cuckold but his wife acted as the plaintiff in the defamation case that followed.[85] In Meldrum's survey of the London consistory court in the early eighteenth century he has found that in all cases when the slander of cuckold was used "it was the wives of those abused as cuckolds who stood as producents", a phenomenon which he does not then go on to explain.[86] Finally, when John Marley fell arguing with Timothy Burrell on the Sandhill in Newcastle in 1622, and Timothy called John a "cuckoldly fellow", even though there is no indication that John's wife was present at the time of the quarrel, she and her husband launched a defamation suit against Timothy.[87] It is strongly asserted that the motivation of married women who brought sexual defamation cases needs to be closely examined before we can make any conclusions about their concern for sexual reputation.

4.3 The Costs of Legal Action

If we are to fully understand the role that defamation cases played in the personal and neighbourhood conflicts of the period, important evidence about the cost of cases in the church courts also needs to be examined. If a person brought a suit fees had to be paid to various court personnel; the judge, registrar and apparitor. We know that the cost of initiating a case was low. 1573 Durham statutes suggest that the cost of issuing a citation was 6d. [88] To put this cost into perspective, Ingram has suggested that the daily wage of a labourer was less than a shilling, and R.A Marchant estimates that a North Riding carpenter before the civil war would have earned a similar daily

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[85] DDR.V.8.f.79v; DDR.V.9.f.11r; DDR.V.11.f.58.
[86] Meldrum. 'A Women's Court', p.10.
[87] DDR.V.11.f.207v-208r.
[88] DDR. vol.XVIII/2 'Statutes of the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Durham,1573'.

wage.[89] Wages of those working in the Durham area are difficult to estimate, but it seems reasonable to expect that they were on a par with other regions.[90] But at each stage of a suit the cost of a case mounted, so for example in Durham in 1573 the cost of the examination of principal parties was 12d.[91] The duration and the complexity of the case increased its cost, and if a case proceeded to sentence costs relative to average earnings could be high.[92] Thus Ingram has found that in Wiltshire "an unusually simple" defamation case in 1615 cost £2 10s. and a more complex suit in the same year cost £4 13s. [93] There were attempts to standardize the fees charged by the church courts, and studies by Marchant and Ingram show that regional variation in fees was slight.[94] In addition, there is some evidence that fees could be waived for very poor defendants, and that the real cost of a suit did not rise through the period.[95] Thus a table of fees due in Durham consistory court in 1708 shows that the cost of a citation had only risen by 1d since 1573.[96] However, the loser of a suit had to pay the other parties' costs as well as his own, and witnesses expected to be reimbursed for any expenses or loss of earnings they had incurred whilst appearing to give evidence. Hence Sharpe believes that by the end of the seventeenth century to fight a defamation suit to its conclusion could have cost as much as £8. [97]

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[89] Ingram, Church Courts, p.58; Marchant, The Church Under the Law, p.145.
[90] For estimates of the wages of common labourers in county Durham in the 1670's see, D. Levine and K. Wrightson, The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560-1765 (Oxford,1991), p.188; Levine and Wrightson note on p.187-188 that the wages of miners, agricultural workers and wage-workers of Newcastle and the surrounding area for earlier in the century are "matters almost entirely hidden from us in the available sources."
[91] DDR. vol.XVIII/2.
[92] Ingram, Church Courts, p.57; Houlbrooke, Church Courts, p.50-51.
[93] Ingram, Church Courts, p.57.
[94] Marchant, The Church, p.141-6; Ingram, Church Courts, p.55-56.
[95] Ingram, ibid., p.57-58; Meldrum, 'A Women's Court',p.3.
[96] Chap.Consist.P.Box 1 'The Fees due in the Consistory Court at Durham'.
[97] R. Wunderli, London Church Courts and Society (Cambridge,MA,1981), p.54; Gowing, 'Women', p.65; Sharpe, "Such Disagreement",p.173.

But if a married woman brought a defamation case against another wife who was responsible for the payment of court fees? The answer must lie in who held the strings to the household purse during marriage. Amy Erickson has shown how in practice in many marriages the doctrine of coverture, whereby women lost all their personal property and control of their real property to their husbands, was modified to allow wives separate estate and pin money.[98] So it is conceivable that some married women would have had sufficient money of their own to meet the expenses of fighting a defamation suit. But court records from marriage separation cases show that disputes over money were often a cause of marital discord.[99] Popular literature also shows that control of money was regarded as a typical topic for argument within marriage. Women are portrayed as angry that husbands waste the portions they brought to marriage, and men complain that wives are never satisfied with what they have. One husband complains of his wife that "Shee'l steal from me all that she can", and another toasts those wives who "never did pick money out of their husband's purse."[100] If a woman does control the household purse then that is portrayed as a sign that the husband no longer rules over her, gender roles are subsequently inverted, and the wife becomes a scold.[101] Popular wisdom within these ballads appears to hold that male dominance depends on witholding money from wives. Hence in 'My Wife will be my Master' the husband of one scold vows that,

> if ever I am a Widdower and another wife do marry,
> I mean to keep her poor and bare and the purse I mean to

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98 A.L. Erickson, Women and Property in Early Modern England (London,1993), especially pp.3-6,24-26,100-103,225-227.

99 M. Hunt, 'Wife Beating', p.16-18.

100 'A he-devil', Pepysian Garland, p.332-336; 'The Scolding Wife', Roxburghe vol. VII, part I, p.192-193; M.P.,'Man's Felicity and Misery', Roxburghe vol.II, p.183-188; 'Match me this Wedding', Roxburghe vol.II, (1636-1641), p.178-182.

101 See for example, 'The Cuckold's Lamentation of a Bad Wife', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.635-637; 'The Scolding Wife' Roxburghe, (1672-94),vol.VII, part I, p.192-193; 'The Invincible Pride of Women', Roxburghe, (c.1686-88), vol.VII, part I, p.20-21; 'My Wife will be my Master', Roxburghe, (c.1640),vol.VII, part I, p.188-189.

carry.[102]

Within Durham church court records there is one very important case which may shed some light on who was footing the bill for defamation suits. In the early 1630's Elinor Rawlyn wife of Robert brought a defamation case against one Cecilie Smith of Denton. After the suit had commenced the curate of Denton tried to effect a reconciliation between the two parties. Significantly, rather than directly approaching Elinor, he first approached her husband and asked him if "he the said Robert was content" if Cecilie Smith paid his wife 20 shillings "for her satisfaction touching the said cause and the charges of the Court". Robert was happy with the sum suggested and Cecilie agreed to the payment. Then Robert, not Elinor, gave an order "for staying the further prosecution of the said cause". The parties met in one Robert Bolton's house in Denton one day in Martinmas 1632, drank a pledge to one another, and Cecilie agreed once more to give Elinor the 20 shillings.[103] However, by the time a bill of charges from the court case had been procured, Cecilie had married one Richard Oswald. Richard Oswald went to visit Robert Rawlyn and with the curate as his witness offered "to pay such charges as should be reasonably required" but claimed that a bill of 20 shillings was "very excessive" and refused to pay the same. The curate notes in his witness statement that despite her husband's refusal Cecilie "always was and yet is very willing to pay such reasonable charges as was to that time expended in that cause". With no settlement reached, in November 1633 Cecilie Smith launched a defamation suit against Elinor Rawlyn, presumably after Elinor claimed that Cecilie

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[102] 'My Wife will be my Master' Roxburghe, (c.1640),vol.VII, part I, p.188-189.
[103] For pledging see below, pp.160-161, 202-203.

could or would not pay what she was owed, and witnesses related to the court the history of their disagreement.[104]

Whilst it appears that if the charges were paid the actual transfer of money would have been from wife to wife, the husbands of both women were the key movers in the negotiations which took place. At times the wives seem to take little part in the decisions which are made; the curate approaches Elinor's husband to see if he finds a monetary settlement satisfactory; it is Robert Rawlyn who calls a halt to the legal proceedings which his wife had initiated, and when Cecilie marries it is the two husbands who meet to discuss terms. In this case it seems that the management of an action brought by a married woman was in the hands of her husband.

The typicality of the involvement of the husbands in this case is difficult to decide. But what is clear from the curate's actions is that men as the managers of household budgets and debt collectors were expected to play key roles in financing the legal actions of their wives. Many wives who wished to launch defamation suits must have consulted, if not sought the permission from their husbands before initiating procedures. And it seems logical that the financial backing of husbands was more likely to have been provided when the husbands themselves had an interest in the suit.

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[104] DDR.Box, no.414, (1633-4), Cecilie Smith v. Elinor Rawlyn; Rawlyn is also spelt Rawlinge.

4.4 Conclusions

The church courts offered unique legal rights to wives, for unlike the common law courts they allowed married women to bring their own suits. The large numbers of women fighting cases in the church courts across the country during this period shows how many women took advantage of this opportunity. However, it has been argued that standing up in court and discussing sexual reputation was in itself inconsistent with ideas of female chastity and honour. Women were meant to be chaste in talk and behaviour.[105] But the argument of this chapter has been that it was sometimes necessary for women to act in this way because women's sexual reputation was of great importance for husbands as well as the women themselves. In some cases sheer anger of a husband may have been sufficient to persuade wives to bring cases. In others couples may have had a shared sense that slander needed to met with a response in the courts. The Durham evidence suggests that the degree to which married women exercised personal agency in these courts must not be exaggerated.

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[105] Gowing, 'Language, power and the law', p.40.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISHONOUR

5.1 Introduction

Most research on sexual defamation has concentrated on revealing its effects on women's lives. Maids could have their marriage prospects jeopardised, wives could find their marriages disrupted and even face desertion or separation, and widows were unlikely to be able to remarry. Women's economic role was also threatened by sexual slander; maids were often dismissed from service, and alewives and other tradeswomen could lose customers.[1] But even with the large number of women fighting sexual slander suits, there are only rare glimpses of the emotional effect of slander on women. For example, in June 1631 Isabell Taylor of the city of Durham told the court how she visited Elizabeth Bell after a quarrel had broken out between Elizabeth and Margaret Sheffeild. During the quarrel Elizabeth had been called a "beggarly quean" and the good name of her husband and her kin had been questioned. When Isabell found Elizabeth in the kitchen her eyes were "red with weeping".[2] We are even less likely to find evidence of men's emotional response to loss of reputation when contemporary thought held it unmanly and a sign of weakness to cry or show feelings of emotional distress. Thus King Lear (c.1605) feels "asham'd" when he is moved to tears, which he describes as "women's weapons" which can "shake" his manhood.[3] However, there is a wealth of material within popular culture which can provide clues to the implications of the loss of male sexual reputation in both the private and public spheres. This chapter explores these consequences, and distinguishes between

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[1] See for example, DDR.V.9.f.170v; DDR.V.10A.f.52r; DDR.V.10B.ff.337,343; Godolphin, Reportorium Canonicum, p.516-520; Meldrum, 'A Women's Court', p.9-10; Ingram, Church Courts, p.309-311; Clark, 'Whores and gossips', p.238-239, Gowing, 'Women', p.80-81.

[2] DDR.V.12.ff.287v,290r.

[3] Shakespeare, King Lear (c.1605), I,iv,294-296; II,iv,275-276.

those which were likely to be common to all men, and those which were particular to certain social groups.

5.2 Scolding Wives

When a wife committed adultery and thereby shamed her husband, the marital discord which could ensue was thought just as likely to be fuelled by anger from the wife as from the husband.[4] Thus in 1607 when Mistress Graunt committed adultery with John Warner in Little Barningham, Norfolk, villagers told the court how her infidelity had led her to "greatly disagree together" with her husband.[5] For the most obvious consequence for a married man who lost his sexual reputation was that his wife was also seen as a scold. So it was believed that if a man had no sexual control over his wife all other control was subsequently lost. This is shown in numerous ballads of the period in which cuckolded husbands also find themselves victims of scolds.[6] The connection between sexual and vocal control is made most explicit in the Caroline ballad 'The Discontented Married Man'. Men are warned to rule their wives, otherwise, as the chorus line reminds them, women will find it impossible to keep their "lips together", a reference to both a woman's mouth and her genitals.[7] The link between female chastity and scolding was also made in statements made to the courts. During an argument between Dorothy Dunn and Anne Scott of Sedgefield in June 1629, Anne called Dorothy a whore

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[4] For angry husbands see above, p.126-130.

[5] As cited in Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.123.

[6] See for example, 'Advice to Batchelors', Roxburghe,vol.III, p.376-379; 'The Patient Husband and the Scolding Wife', Roxburghe, (c.1673),vol.VII, Part I, p.182-184; 'The Invincible Pride of Women', Roxburghe, (c.1686-88),vol.VII, part I, p.20-21.

[7] The Discontented Married Man', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.295-299; and see previous discussion of women's talk above, p.37-47; for a full account of this ballad see E.A. Foyster, 'A Laughing Matter? Marital Discord and Gender Control in Seventeenth-Century England', Rural History, no.4,1, (1993), pp.16-17.

who was "burnt" with the pox. She added to the insult by saying that she also had the pox "dried" within her throat. Sexual disobedience had affected every channel of her body, leaving her, as another witness put it, "burnt within".[8]

Whilst courtship was feared to be a period in which men were prone to effeminate behaviour when women ruled their lovers, marriage was intended as an institution in which men and women resumed their rightful places in the gender order.[9] Husbands of scolds are portrayed as men who have been unable to regain a position of dominance. So in the ballads these husbands play female roles, washing dishes, cooking and cleaning the house.[10] Their wives wear the breeches and become the masters. Wives show their power by their ability to refuse any sexual contact with their husbands. The wife in 'The Cuckold's Complaint' beats her husband if he happens to "touch her Toe" in bed, and he tells the audience how if he tries to kiss her "she'll fling and throw, And call me Cuckold to my face".[11] In other ballads the husband is literally kicked out of bed.[12]

This prescriptive material is closely paralleled from the evidence of some of the separation cases that reached the court of Arches. In Alexander Denton's case against his wife for adultery heard in 1688, he and his witnesses told the court of the behaviour which accompanied Hester Denton's adultery. Whilst Hester's

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[8] DDR.V.12.f.140-141r.
[9] See above, p.65-68.
[10] See for example, 'The Henpeckt Cuckold', Roxburghe, (c.1689-91),vol.VII, part II, p.432; 'My Wife will be my Master', Roxburghe, (c.1640),vol.VII, part I, p.188; 'The Jolly Widdower', Pepys, vol.IV, p.102.
[11] 'The Cuckold's Complaint', Roxburghe, (c.1689-91),vol.VII, part II, p.431.
[12] See for example, 'The Cuckold's Lamentation of a Bad Wife', Roxburghe, vol III, p.635-637; 'My Wife will be my Master', Roxburghe, (c.1640),vol.VII, part I, p.188-189.

behaviour was never described as that of a scold, her actions spoke of the disrespect and lack of reverence that was expected of a woman who was cuckolding her husband. It was alleged by friends and servants that she did not rise from her seat or take notice of her husband when he entered the room, she "made mouths" at him behind his back and when he was eating, and refused to let him touch, kiss, or allow him his conjugal rights from her for more than sixteen months.[13] Sarah Hooper was a servant to William and Mary Hockmore in the 1690's. Sarah told the court of Arches that when Mary started an affair with Charles Manley, a midshipman, her adulterous behaviour precipitated a complete breakdown in household order. William's lack of control over his wife, once his claim to sexual exclusivity had been lost, led Mary to invite her lover and the crew from his ship to stay in his home in Devon. This company joined in Mary's scolding of her husband "calling him base and scandalous names". William was so afraid of damage to his property that he was forced to keep "a continual Guard in the fields to prevent the said Crew from burning and destroying his corn". The threat of damage to his property later extended to a fear of personal injury. Verbal abuse of adulterous wives could extend to physical violence. On one occasion Mary was said to have openly boasted to her husband that "she was a Whore and had cuckolded him sufficiently". When William then tried to leave her company she and her female servants forcefully kept him in the house "against his will", threatening to "bind him if he would not be quiet". When he got into the courtyard she said she would "split his skull" if he did not return to the house. She and the servants derided him, called him a fool, and said they would never obey him. It was only the next afternoon, the story went, that William could make his "escape out of a window of his said house".[14]

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[13] CA,Case 2730,(1688), Ee7, f.18 Eee7,ff.60r,64v,72v,75r,79v,80v,82v,84v, 85v,90v.

[14] CA,Case 4642,(1698), Eee8, f.615.

Of course, Sarah Hooper's story may well have been an exaggerated picture of reality to please her master, which drew upon a tradition within popular culture of narratives telling of violent and even murderous adulterous wives. The story of Arden of Faversham, which was based on real events which took place in 1551, and told of Alice's murder of her husband for her lover Mosby, so fascinated contemporaries that it formed the basis of both a play and subsequent ballads.[15] Another story within this genre, also based on real events, and related in ballads of the late sixteenth century, was that of Mistress Page who murdered her husband for the love of George Strangwidge.[16] When Mary Hobry murdered her husband in 1688, at least four accounts of the murder were published.[17] In the ballads 'The West Country Weaver' and 'Mirth for Citizens' the threat of violence is also depicted as coming from the lover of the wife. Gallants threaten husbands with blows, draw swords, and wish the death of them.[18] Gowing has shown from London consistory court evidence that the danger from gallants to husbands was not just fictitious and that husbands could be beaten by their rivals.[19] Records of the Elizabethan consistory courts and the court of Requests reveal that men believed

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[15] Anon, Arden of Faversham (c.1591); for a ballad see for example, 'Mistress Arden of Faversham', Roxburghe, (1633),vol. VIII, part I-II, p.49-53; see also C. Belsey, 'Alice Arden's Crime', in R. Wilson and R. Dutton, (eds), New Historicism and Renaissance Drama (New York,1992), p.131-144.

[16] 'The Lamentation of Master Page's Wife', Roxburghe, (1591),vol.I, p.555-558; 'The Sorrowful Complaint of Mistress Page', Shirburn, No.XXVII, p.111-113; Belsey, 'Alice', p.137.

[17] S.D. Amussen, "'Being Stirred to Much Unquietness", p.76; for further examples of the portrayal of murderous wives in popular literature see F.E. Dolan, 'Home-Rebels and House-Traitors', p.1-31; and G. Walker, "'Demons in Female Form": Representations of Women and Gender in Murder Pamphlets of the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in W. Zunder and S. Trill (eds), Writing in the Renaissance (forthcoming).

[18] 'The West Country Weaver', Roxburghe, (c.1685),vol.VII, part I, p.22-23; 'Mirth for Citizens', Roxburghe, (c.1671),vol.VIII, part III, p.699-700.

[19] Gowing, 'Gender', p.16.

that their lives could be threatened by their wives' adulterous liaisons.[20] Deposition records of cases which reached the courts in the late seventeenth century show that these fears of murderous wives were still very much alive. Richard Shawe and his witnesses told the court of Arches in 1676 how once Anne Shawe had committed adultery she became violent towards her husband and threatened to kill him. Witnesses said that she struck her husband with an axe, kept a sword under the bed, and threw pots and an iron at him so that "they would have killed him".[21] In 1669 the court heard a witness for John Hubbard, of St. Clement Danes, Middlesex reveal how Grace Hubbard's lover had intreated his friend to "beat and abuse" John.[22] When Thomas, Earl of Stamford heard that his wife's lover, his servant John Jennings, had threatened to kill him, he was so frightened that he had warrants issued for his arrest.[23]

It is clear that the adulterous behaviour of a wife could have a number of consequences, which, because they exposed the cuckolded husband as powerless, served only to further shame him. One husband in a ballad pleads with his wife not to let others know that she commands him because it will bring him "disgrace", and in another ballad a cuckolded husband laments that the behaviour of his unfaithful, scolding and violent wife leaves him "hen-peckt to the sight of my friends".[24] Within this context it is understandable why historians studying the church courts of the early seventeenth century have found that men rarely sued for separation on grounds of cruelty. In Durham of the four cases for separation for bed and board between 1604 and 1631, only one case was brought on grounds of cruelty, and that

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[20] Belsey, 'Alice', p.136; Stretton, 'Women and Litigation', pp.223-4,236.
[21] CA,Case 8209,(1676),Eee5, ff.440v,441v; Eee6, ff.62v,63v,64v.
[22] CA,Case 4834,(1669),Eee3, ff.320-321,326v-328r,341r.
[23] CA,Case 8648,(1686),Ee6, f.111v.
[24] 'A Merry Discourse', Roxburghe, (c.1603-1625),vol.I, p.249-253; 'The Cuckold's Lamentation of a Bad Wife', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.635-637.

had a female plaintiff.[25] That we only learn of the cruelty that George Whitehead of North Shields supposedly suffered at the hands of his wife after his death in a case disputing his will in 1625, may be taken to suggest that in a man's lifetime it was too shameful for him to admit to being beaten by his wife.[26] In the Restoration period of forty-two cases for separation on grounds of cruelty which reached the court of Arches 1660-1700, only five were brought by men.[27] Of these it is clear that the cases were initiated to dispute the sums of alimony allocated in the lower consistory courts. In only two cases is violence by the wife mentioned, probably with the purpose of adding substance to allegations of wifely disobedience.[28] So when men such as William Hockmore and Richard Shawe did relate stories of their wife's cruelty to the courts, to try to avoid further shame and mockery, they generally presented stories in the context of suits for adultery. Furthermore, they may well have tended to exaggerate the degree of violence to which they were subjected to win the sympathy of the court. In this way Sarah Hooper may also have needed to exaggerate her mistress's violence before describing her master's escape out of the window of his house. For then his actions could be interpreted as those of a desperate man whose life was at risk, rather than as the behaviour of a fool and a coward.[29]

5.3 Community Reactions to Male Dishonour

A community which became aware that a husband had been cuckolded could mock

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[25] DDR.V.12. ff.283v-285r; 288r-288v; also see Ingram, Church Courts, p.183, and Gowing, 'Women', pp.152,163.
[26] DDR.V.11. ff.409-414r,428v-432r.
[27] See CA,Case 4177 (1669); CA,Case 3270 (1675); CA,Case 2402 (1677); CA,Case 2476 (1684), and CA,Case 8736 (1685).
[28] See CA,Case 3270 (1675) and CA,Case 8736 (1685).
[29] Gowing also believes that the degree of female violence against husbands was often exaggerated, see 'Women', p.163.

him using horns as symbols. So in 1620 in Chester le Street, Durham, during a dispute between William Wales and Thomas Postgate, a witness heard William tell Thomas "go thou art a cuckold" and then William "held two of his fingers towards him importing or signifying a sign of horns".[30] Historians studying records from across the country have found that real horns could be placed on the door or on the property, or even attached to the church pew of a man suspected of being cuckolded.[31] When Stephen Seagar of Aldgate accused his wife of cuckolding him with his apprentice in 1669, one witness related that when Stephen's fate became public knowledge he saw a man stand outside Stephen's house and hold up "a pair of Ram's horns".[32] The long-term consequences of this type of mockery can be seen from a Star Chamber case for libel brought by Robert Reede of Tiverton. In 1610 he had been the victim of a mocking rhyme and a pair of horns were fastened to his door. He told the court how from this point whenever his neighbours passed him or his wife in the street they used their fingers to make the cuckold's sign. This was "likely not only to cause a separation between them but also were like to have bereaved them both of their lives through the grief, sorrow and discontentment which they conceived at the said scandalous imputations."[33]

Another form of derision was the use of mocking rhymes which could circulate in a community in oral form, or be written and displayed in prominent places such as on a church door.[34] Even though the secular courts became responsible for the

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[30] DDR.V.11. f.70r.

[31] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.131; Ingram, Church Courts, p.254; D.E. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion (Oxford,1985), p.100-101; J.A. Sharpe, Crime in seventeenth-century England, p.62; A. Macfarlane, Marriage and Love in England (Oxford,1986), p.240; A. Fox, 'Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England', Past and Present, 145, (1994), p.62.

[32] CA,Case 8136,(1669),Eee4, ff.5v,6r.

[33] As cited in Fox, 'Aspects of Oral Culture', p.239; see also Fox, 'Ballads, Libels', p.74-75.

[34] See M. Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England', in B. Reay (ed.), Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England

prosecution of the authors of these libels, there are occasional references to mocking rhymes in the church courts.[35] So in the dispute between Thomas Postgate and William Wales in 1620, William not only made horn signs at Thomas, but also wrote a mocking ballad about Thomas which depicted him as a cuckold. William had the affront to hand a copy of the rhyme to Thomas, who had to undergo further humiliation as being unable to read, he was forced to ask a neighbour to read it to him. Thomas clearly intended to take action in response to this insult for the next day he visited the curate of Chester le Street and asked him to make a copy of the libel. This was a wise decision for when Thomas then tried to get William to put his name on the original in front of his neighbours, William duly tore it up and threw it out of the window. The curate's copy was presented to the court in the defamation case which followed.[36] Similarly, when Stephen Seagar's wife was suspected of making him a cuckold in 1669, he not only had horns held outside his house, but also found that his dishonour was "so public and notorious" that ballads were written about his wife and apprentice.[37] It appears from this case that a man's loss of honour often did not long remain personal to him, but became a matter of public interest and knowledge.

This evidence from court cases gives us the context for the many ballads and drama of the period which refer to the public rituals employed in dishonouring men for the loss of sexual control. Horns were the visual representations of dishonour that made public what men most desired to keep private. Appearing on the head of the cuckold, horns were phallic symbols which made a man a fool because of their lack

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(London,1985), p.178-188; Fox, 'Aspects of Oral Culture',chapter four, especially p.203-253; Fox, 'Ballads, Libels', p.47-83.

[35] Ingram, 'Ridings',Past and Present, p.101, and Fox, 'Aspects', p.213.

[36] DDR.V.11. ff.68-70r,77v,78r,96r; for the practice of literate members of a community recording and reading mocking rhymes for others see Fox, 'Ballads, Libels', p.58-60.

[37] CA,Case 8136,(1669),Eee3, ff.605r,606v,613v,616v.

of potency and their "dumb bestiality".[38] When 'The London Cuckold' feels horns growing on his head he tells his wife "'tis of your making", and in another ballad a jealous husband fears that his wife will make him join the "shameful sort" that wear horns.[39] Fear alone about being cuckolded can make the buds of horns appear, hence Othello (c.1604) feels the pain of horns appearing when he begins to believe that Desdemona has cuckolded him, and Sparkish warns the suspicious Pinchwife in The Country Wife (1675) that "cuckolding, like the smallpox, comes with a fear".[40] One newly married husband in a ballad tells others that it is only if men take care of their wives, in other words, provide them with satisfactory sex, that they will avoid wearing the fully grown horns.[41] Many cuckolds complain of the pain of horns; one is unable to sleep because of the pain, another is forced to "stoop" under their weight.[42] But this pain is justified in the preface to 'The Jolly Widdower' as due "punishment" for marrying a shrew and being unable to control her.[43] As men who allowed their wives to rule over them cuckolds are portrayed in fiction and slander accusations as threatening to household order. Their horns grow so big that they even destroy the structure of their houses, as Anne Phesey indicated in 1609 in her words to William Dynes, "Go thou cuckoldly slave thou wittal thy horns are so great that thou canst scarce get in at thine own doors, take heed thou dost not break a hole with thy horns through thy neighbours wall".[44]

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[38] Kahn, Man's Estate, p.122; Novell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy', p.8-10.

[39] 'The London Cuckold', Roxburghe, (1686),vol.VIII, part III, p.603-604; 'All such as lead a jealous life', Shirburn, No.LXIV, p.263-267.

[40] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604), III,iii,288; Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675), IV,iv,74.

[41] 'The New Married Couple', Roxburghe, (c.1675),vol.IV, p.17-19; see above, p. 78-91.

[42] 'The Cuckold's Lamentation of a Bad Wife', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.635-637; 'The Wheel-Wrights Huy-and-Cry', Pepys, (1693),vol.IV, p.115.

[43] 'The Jolly Widdower', Pepys, vol.IV, p.102.

[44] As cited in Gowing, 'Gender', p.17; for the meaning of wittal below, p.230-231.

There were degrees of dishonour which a man could suffer, and to be a target of a charivari was probably the ultimate public disgrace. Charivaris were loud mocking demonstrations aimed at shaming individuals who had offended community norms.[45] They could be directed against men who allowed their wives to rule over them. So in Wetherden in Suffolk in 1604, after the drunken Nicholas Rosyer was beaten by his wife, his neighbour Thomas Quarry was made to "ride about the town upon a cowlstaff" wearing a gown and apron.[46] Dorothy Bolton of Heighington told Durham consistory court in October 1609 how she heard that Jane Romwhate "did so abuse her husband, as in reproach thereof her next neighbour was carried upon a stang about the town."[47] Riding a 'stang' was the northern version of charivari which involved mounting a man on a pole and then carrying him through the streets.[48] We tend to only have records of charivaris when they became troublesome to the authorities, which means that it is difficult to estimate how often they occurred. But there is no doubt that this public exposure of a man's dishonour often amounted to feelings of utter humiliation, disgrace, and rejection from a community. Indeed, the Rosyers were forced to leave Wetherden in shame.[49] These shaming rituals won popular notoriety and charivaris featured in plays such as The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597), in which at the end of the play, Falstaff is mocked by the wives in a ritual which closely resembles a riding skimmington.[50]

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[45] M. Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music', Past and Present, p.79-113.
[46] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.118; Newman, Fashioning Femininity, p.35.
[47] DDR.V.9.f.174r.
[48] OED; Thompson, Customs, p.471-2; Ingram,'Ridings', Past and Present, p.82.
[49] Newman, Fashioning,p.35; Thompson, Customs, p.488.
[50] Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597), V,v; A. Parten, 'Falstaff's Horns: Masculine Inadequacy and Feminine Mirth in The Merry Wives of Windsor', Studies in Philology, vol.82, (1985), p.184-199; for further examples of plays which have references to charivari see Ingram, 'Ridings',Past and Present, p.106-107.

The processions which were often part of these ridings could end at a Horn Fair, and these fairs are referred to in the ballads of the seventeenth century. The most [in]famous of these fairs is recorded as having been held annually on St. Luke's Day, the 18th October, at Charlton in Kent. A crowd met at Cuckold's Point on the south bank of the Thames at Rotherhithe and marched in a procession through Deptford and Greenwich to Charlton. Local legend held that the fair and its association with cuckoldry originated when King John was caught by a miller committing adultery with his wife. To make amends with the cuckolded miller the king granted the miller all the land he could see as far as the bend in the river which was to be called Cuckold's Point. In return the miller had to make an annual pilgrimage to Cuckold's Point, (which also came to be known as Cuckold's Haven), wearing a pair of buck's horns. Of course, there is no historical evidence for this story, and it is probable that over time the naming of the fair was related to the selling of horned beasts, and its date associated with St. Luke whose emblem is a bull.[51] However, in the popular mind it is likely that the festive elements of the fair retained their links with cuckoldry. Hence in 1598 a German lawyer Paul Hentzner described how he saw the fair. "It was an ancient custom for a procession to go from some of the inns in Bishopgate in which procession were a King, a Queen, a miller and his pretty wife, a counsellor and a great number of others with horns on their hats."[52] The 1605 play Eastward Ho! by Ben Jonson, George Chapman and John Marston featured a humiliated, shipwrecked husband who is washed up at Cuckold's Haven.[53] In 1623 John Taylor, a poet and boatman on the Thames had

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[51] J.G. Smith, Charlton: a compilation of the Parish and its People vol.III (privately printed, 1984), p.409-428; H. Adshead, 'Cuckold's Point', Port of London Authority Monthly, (September 1954), p.197-199; Thompson, Customs, p.483-484; Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society, p.77-78; Charlton still has a Horn Fair Festival, but it is now celebrated in June. There remains a point on the Thames known as 'Cuckold's Point' at Rotherhithe, see Bartholomew's Reference Atlas of Greater London (Edinburgh,1968), p.76.

[52] As cited in Smith, Charlton, p.409.

[53] Woodbridge, Women, p.172-173.

heard stories about the fair, and was disappointed not to find anything marking Cuckold's Haven. He later remarked with relief that local people had set up a post marking the spot.[54] Stories of the fair continued into the Restoration period. The 1685 ballad 'Hey for Horn-Fair' describes the Charlton Horn Fair as an event which attracts wives who have forsaken "their Husband's dull bed" and who join with gallants at the fair who know how to please them. Cuckolded husbands have to perform the humiliating task of digging gravel to make a path for their wives to take them to the fair.[55] In other ballads scolding wives threaten to make their husbands dig gravel at the next horn fair.[56] Southerne's The Wives' Excuse (1692) mentions the horn fair as a time when a married man with a good looking wife is "put in mind of his fortune". Fortune in this context could either mean his fate to be a cuckold, or may be indicative of the uncertain future of a man married to a beautiful wife.[57] The fair even became the subject of one popular proverb, "To send one to Cuckold's Haven".[58] From the writings of contemporaries it is clear that the fair did win a reputation for promiscuous behaviour, leading to temporary suppression in the late eighteenth century, and it is likely that there were some fairs at which wives cuckolded their husbands.[59] But it seems from the popularity of stories about the fair that to this wider audience the fair's fictional origins and purpose were far more significant than what actually occurred at each fair. The fair which the ballads represented was a public occasion from which men who had lost

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[54] B. Capp, The World of John Taylor the Water Poet 1578-1653 (Oxford,1994), p.116, footnote 103.

[55] 'Hey for Horn-Fair', Roxburghe, (1685), vol.VIII, part III, p.665-666; see also 'A New Song On Horn-Fair', (1685), vol.VIII, part III, p.667-668; and J. Wardroper (ed.), Lovers, Rakes and Rogues (London,1995), pp.271-273,353.

[56] 'The Dyer's Destiny', Roxburghe, (1685-1688), vol.IV, p.405-407; 'The Scolding Wife's Vindication', Roxburghe, (c.1689), vol.VII, part I, p.197; for other references to Horn Fairs see, 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483; 'The Well-Approved Doctor', Pepys, vol.IV, p.149; Bull-Feather Hall, p.11-15.

[57] Southerne, The Wives' Excuse, I,i,125-128.

[58] Tilley, A Dictionary, C886.

[59] Smith, Charlton, p.412-415.

their sexual reputation were excluded and humiliated. Forcing them to bow to the greater sexual powers of their wives was symbolized by the story of the gravel digging. Both in popular literature, and on the actual promontory by the Thames, the carnivalistic elements of the Charlton Horn Fair played out portrayals of the 'world turned upside down'.

A similarly popular story portrayed in ballads was that cuckolded husbands were unable to eat roast ram, an animal whose horns also symbolized cuckoldry. At 'A Banquet for Sovereign Husbands', which was supposedly held on Midsummer's Day 1629, the ballad 'reports' that only husbands who ruled their wives were able to eat the ram, others did not for fear of 'displeasing' their wives. Eating the ram is a test of manhood, and only those who succeed are preserved from cuckoldry;

> [And many a man there] thither came,
> [Swearing he would] his wife rule and tame:
> [And that he s]hould eat up the spit,
> [His wife also] should taste a bit.
> [But all be]held most sure I am
> [That nothing was ea]ten of the Ramme.

The story was retold by John Taylor in 1652 in his Newes from Tenebris.[60] In 'Have among you! good Women', another ballad by Martin Parker, one man says that a husband who "will be his wife's drudge...should eat none o' th' roasted Ram."[61] It appears that there was a whole genre within popular mythology which focused on relating tales of customs which shamed the cuckold.

Of course, in reality community responses to male dishonour did not always

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[60] M.P., 'A Banquet for Sovereign Husbands', Pepysian Garland, p.328-331, much of the third and four stanzas were badly damaged; Capp, The World of John Taylor, p.115-116.

[61] M.P., 'Have among you! good Women', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.435-440.

victimize the husband directly. Women who were thought to be whores could be subject to official punishments by the secular authorities and carted through the streets. When sexual insults were used against women they were often reminded of this degrading punishment. Hence in April 1627 when the married Isabell Wright was called a whore by Isabell Sander in an alehouse in Framwellgate, Durham, she was also called "a common whore and a carted whore".[62] In the separation case between William Newton and his wife Alice, heard in the Durham consistory court in 1610, witnesses deposed how Alice was carted through the streets of Durham, and her lover Richard Waules whipped, when they were discovered committing adultery. When they continued to defy the authorities, constables dramatically broke down the door of Richard Waules' house, dragged Alice out from where she was hiding under his bed, and took them both to Durham goal.[63]

Punishments against disobedient wives could be concerned with as much publicizing a man's failure to rule and his subsequent loss of reputation, as serving to shame his wife. When a woman was ducked in Leeds in 1619 she claimed that as a result she *and* her husband were utterly "disgraced [and] defamed".[64] Women who were accused of being scolds could be subjected to a range of punishments from bridles or branks - iron collars with bits which cut into the tongue to prevent the woman from talking - to the cucking or ducking stool.[65] Whilst in Elizabethan and early Stuart England there may not have been an 'epidemic' of scolding to the

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[62] DDR.V.12.f.71-72r; for other examples see DDR.V.9.f.182r; DDR.V.11.f.167-168r; DDR.V.12.f.141r; Gowing, 'Women', p.59; Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold', p.127-128.

[63] DDR.V.9.ff.249-250,257r.

[64] As cited in Ingram, '"Scolding"', p.61.

[65] Underdown, 'The Taming' p.116-136; Ingram, '"Scolding"', p.48-80; Thompson, Customs, p.502; for vivid accounts by women who underwent these punishments see, L.E. Boose, 'Scolding Bridles and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member', Shakespeare Quarterly, vol.42, no.2, (1991), p.205-211.

extent that Underdown has argued, the pattern of prosecutions for scolding suggests that contemporaries perceived scolds to be women who persistently insulted, abused or 'harassed' those living outside their households.[66] The early seventeenth century ballad 'The cucking of a scold' supports these findings. The wife in the ballad is punished by a charivari which ends with a ducking after she scolds many of her neighbours, both "old and young", and even the constable.[67] For community action to be taken against those who were thought to be whores and/or scolds wives' disobedience had to disrupt neighbourhood order as well as household order. Such a situation could only arise if a man had lost control over his wife.

Basic to all these forms of charivari "was mocking laughter, sometimes mild and good-hearted, but often taking the form of hostile derision."[68] It was being made the butt of other people's jokes which most distressed cuckolds in contemporary ballads. 'The Cock-pit Cuckold' complains that his neighbours laugh at him because his wife commits adultery with a young squire; 'The Merry Cuckold' is jeered at by his friends who taunt him by telling him to "dine at the Bull or the Ramme"; and the cuckold Simon in 'Household Talk' complains that "my dearest friends doe scoffe me".[69] Sometimes, unusually, men confessed that they were hurt by this derision. When John Charnock was accused of cruelty against his wife in 1673, he defended his actions by telling the court of his wife's adulterous and scolding behaviour. He believed he had " no Joy Comfort or Content at home, and was laughed at and scorned abroad".[70] Laughter at cuckolds could be real, as well as imagined or suspected. During Dorothy Skelton's affair in London with Charles

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[66] Underdown, 'The Taming'; Ingram, '"Scolding"'.
[67] 'The Cucking of a Scold', Pepysian Garland, p.72-77.
[68] Ingram, 'Ridings', Past and Present, pp.82,98.
[69] 'The Cock-pit Cuckold', Pepys, vol IV, p.141; 'The Merry Cuckold', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.5-8; 'Household Talk', Roxburghe, (1603-1625),vol.I, p.441-446.
[70] CA,Case 1813,(1673),Ee4, f.120r.

Brookes, a servant to Baron Brouncker, she openly frequented alehouses with her lover whilst her husband was at sea. One witness recalled hearing "some gentlemen" laughing as they saw Dorothy and Charles leaving a tavern in a coach, and joking "that when Captains are at sea, their wives must be coached about by footboys." Although in this case Captain Skelton did not admit to being harmed by laughter, the witnesses' statement shows the assumption that if a man lost his sexual reputation, he would easily become a laughing stock.[71]

There are a number of theories explaining why people laugh, and what function laughter serves.[72] The complex nature of humour may mean that the historian will never be able to give a definitive answer as to what lay behind the laughter of those who mocked cuckolds. Laughter may also have been experienced differently depending on whether it was provoked by the presence of a 'real' cuckold, or by the reading, listening or sight of a fictional cuckold in ballads and plays. It is unlikely, however, that people laughed at the cuckold simply because he was an incongruous figure with whom men could not or would not identify themselves.[73] Laughter must have required a degree of empathy, and an understanding of the cuckold's predicament. Furthermore, laughter may, as Ingram has suggested in his study of audiences at charivaris, have served a purpose of a cathartic release. Men who laughed at the cuckold may have temporarily been able to free their otherwise hidden anxieties and fears about married life.[74] So, as Joy Wiltenburg has argued, explaining the humour of many of the ballads about cuckoldry requires

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[71] CA,Case 8350,(1673),Eee5, f.70v.

[72] For a useful summary of these theories see, A.A. Berger, An Anatomy of Humor (New Brunswick,1993), p.1-11; for a study of laughter in historical perspective see, K. Thomas, 'The place of laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', The Times Literary Supplement, (January 21st, 1977), p.77-81; Sharpe, 'Plebeian Marriage', p.85-89; for the laughter that ballads may have provoked see, Foyster, 'A Laughing Matter?', p.9-10.

[73] Novell, 'The Cuckold in Restoration Comedy', pp.143,149,154.

[74] Ingram, 'Ridings', Past and Present, p.98.

understanding that this comedy "both reflected male anxieties and helped to ease them."[75] The seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes believed that laughter was "proof of weakness, indicating pleasure in the misfortunes of others and lack of confidence in one's own abilities."[76] When Swift watched a crowd at a charivari he observed that,

> Those men who wore the breeches least
> Called him a cuckold, fool and beast.[77]

These men laughed 'nervously' because they lacked confidence in their own abilities as husbands, all the while fearing that they too would share the cuckold's fate.

But Hobbes, drawing upon Aristotle's philosophy, also thought that "this passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory, arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly".[78] In other words, people may have laughed at the cuckold because they wished to assert themselves as superior to the cuckold. Pleasure was gained at the sufferings of others. Laughter in this way can take on a political function, as those in power laugh at those who have none. In many of the community responses to male dishonour it was women who were temporarily given power over men, and this inversion of conventional gender roles in itself provokes more laughter.[79]

How far this laughter then acted as a form of social control is difficult to

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[75] Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women, p.156.
[76] As cited in Thomas, 'The place of laughter', p.80.
[77] As cited in Ingram, 'Ridings', in Reay (ed.), Popular Culture, p.176.
[78] As cited in S.C. Sen Gupta, Shakespearian Comedy (Oxford,1950), p.1.
[79] I. Donaldson, The World Upside-Down:Comedy from Jonson to Fielding (Oxford,1970); N.Z. Davis, 'Women on Top' in Society and Culture in Early Modern France (London,1975), p.124-151.

determine. The contemporary playwright Thomas Heywood certainly believed that comedy could serve a social function, for it encouraged men to "reform that simplicity in themselves which others make their sport".[80] The work of modern psychologists has agreed with this point of view, "in laughter we always find an unavowed intention to humiliate, and consequently to correct our neighbour, if not in his will, at least in his deed."[81] When a community came together to mock an individual who did not conform to gender norms, laughter may well have also acted as "a powerful source of social cohesion".[82] Charivaris were occasions when a community could display a collective understanding of honour; communities as well as individuals had reputations to maintain.[83] A charivari may have acted as a corrective to behaviour in so far as it demanded a response from its victim. As one anthropologist has explained, "to be ridiculous is to lack the recognition for social reputation."[84] The cuckold, as will be explained in chapter seven, could attempt to regain recognition by altering his behaviour so that he reassumed household control, or, as in the case of Nicholas Rosyner at Wetherden, be forced to leave the community in shame. Most cuckolds could only tolerate the laughter of others for so long.

5.4 Occupation and Office:

> It is impossible for a man to understand how to govern the common-wealth, that doth not know how to rule his own house or order his own person; so that he that knoweth not to govern, deserveth not to reign.[85]

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[80] T. Heywood, An Apology for Actors (London,1841 edition), p.54, as cited in E. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Early Comedies, (New Jersey,1965), p.14.
[81] H. Bergson, Laughter (London,1921), pp.136,197.
[82] Thomas, 'The place', p.77.
[83] Thompson, Customs, p.489.
[84] Campbell, Honour, Family and Patronage, p.313.
[85] Dod and Cleaver, A Godly Form, sig.A8v, as cited in Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.37-38.

The household was a "little Commonwealth" in which a man was expected to demonstrate his ability to govern.[86] It was widely understood that a man who could not rule his wife would not be held responsible for public office outside the home. So a man who lost his honour by being made a cuckold, should be, as Thomas Whythorne wrote, "barred of divers functions and callings of estimation in the commonwealth as a man defamed".[87] Othello's cry at his 'discovery' of Desdemona's adultery "Farewell, Othello's occupation's gone!" is particularly relevant here. The pun on the word 'occupation' to imply both vocation and copulation shows that notions of 'public' and 'private' reputation were inseparable in this society.[88]

In theory, if a man had been damaged materially by sexual slander then he should have taken his case to the secular courts, rather than the church courts.[89] Hence, in the defamation cases of the church courts there are only occasional cases which give us evidence of how reputation could shape a man's job prospects. One such case is that of the apprentice George Fenwick of Newcastle who tried to prevent Margaret Sharpe from telling others of how they had committed fornication. He believed that if his sexual behaviour became public knowledge "it would be to his utter undoing for he should thereby be utterly ashamed and lose his freedom". Even though George had already served six years of his apprenticeship, a poor sexual reputation could bar him from gaining freeman status.[90] Similarly, when

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[86] Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.17.
[87] As cited in Hodgkin, 'Thomas Whythorne', p.35.
[88] Shakespeare, Othello (c.1604), III,iii,363; Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, p.155; M. Hattaway, 'Fleshing his Will in the Spoil of her Honour: Desire, Misogyny and the Perils of Chivalry', Shakespeare Survey, vol.46, (1994),p.131.
[89] See for example, J. March, Actions for Slaunder (London,1647), and Godolphin, Reportorium Canonicum., chapter XXXVIII, 'Of Defamation'.
[90] DDR.V.11.ff.478v-481;DDR.V.12.ff.4v,5.

Asa Scandover was dismissed from the earl of Hertford's service in the period 1615-1629, he claimed that it was because three women said that he had sex with one Bridget Humphrey.[91]

In the separation suits which reached the church courts husbands in their personal answers often argued that a consequence of their wives' adultery was that they had been driven into debt. So Thomas Middleton claimed in February 1662 that he was "by reason of the lewd and Adulterous Carriage of [his wife]...much indebted".[92] Several contemporary ballads warned that this was the fate of the cuckolded husband; a merchant complains in one that when his wife is with her lover "with my treasure his pockets she often will line", and in another ballad the adulterous wife "spends her husband's treasure" at the dancing school where she meets her lovers.[93] Of course, in the courts statements such as Thomas Middleton's are often stock phrases about indebtedness which may well have been used to try to avoid paying large sums of alimony. But occasionally more detail is given in a case to show and convince the court that a wife's behaviour had affected her husbands' trade. For example, witnesses for Richard Shawe, a wine cooper at the Three Tuns in Smithfield, London, claimed in 1676 that his wife's "fighting and quarrelling" had "so far disturbed his house and Guests that she brought the house into disrepute and caused his Customers to leave and forsake his house". Richard's trade suffered so badly that his creditors had come, seized all his goods, and turned him out of his house.[94] Richard Shawe's experience shows that just as marriage often sealed an

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[91] Ingram, Church Courts, p.309.
[92] CA,Case 6234,(1662),Ee1, f.67r; for other examples see CA,Case 6292,(1669),Ee3, ff.480v-481r; CA,Case 2730,(1688),Ee7, f.17.
[93] 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483; 'The discontented Married Man', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.295-299; see also, 'The Batchelor's Triumph', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.427-429.
[94] CA,Case 8209,(1676),Eee5, f.439v-441r;Eee6, f.61v-63r.

economic union, so also adultery could serve to destroy it.[95]

It is clear from some of the cases which reached the secular courts that discrediting a man sexually could be seen by rivals as an effective means to threaten his public position. Hence, one Thomas Pride stood outside the home of a JP in Westminster and cried "Justice Lawrence by God is a pimp" in January 1687. The JP was sufficiently troubled by the accusation that he took Thomas to court to try and clear his name and hold onto his position.[96] When Sir Henry Hastings heard gossip in 1607 that his rival Sir Thomas Beaumont had been cuckolded by one of his servants, Hastings tried to use the information to have Beaumont dismissed from the bench and shunned by local gentry society. A lengthy Star Chamber suit followed as Beaumont defended his reputation.[97] During an infamous dispute between the Hoby and Eure families in the North Riding of Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century, the Eures also tried to jeopardise the political position of Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby by questioning both his godly and sexual reputation. They visited the Hoby household at Hackness and abused Hoby's hospitality by enacting a charivari; drinking heavily they insulted their hosts, damaged property and claimed that Sir Thomas was being cuckolded by his Puritan chaplain. Sir William Eure told Sir Thomas that he would "set up horns at his gate and begone!", and another member of the Eure party threatened to nail some stag horns which were hanging in the hall onto Sir Thomas' head. Hoby took the matter to the Council of the North and then to the Star Chamber. His actions show that he shared in the Eure's understanding of gentry honour codes; that political credibility

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[95] Roper, 'Will and Honour', p.47.
[96] Fletcher, 'Honour, Reputation', p.112.
[97] Cust, 'Honour and Politics', p.57-94.

depended on establishing and maintaining personal reputation.[98]

The Eures' behaviour was insulting to the Hoby's partly because they had failed to participate in the appropriate rituals of hospitality which would have honoured their hosts. Aside from hospitality, there were many rituals within early modern society which made clear which men were seen as deserving of honour. Men of honour could expect others to doff their hats in their presence.[99] There was a market amongst the social elite for books such as Courtin's The Rules of Civility (1671) and Gailhard's The Compleat Gentleman (1678) which gave instructions on the appropriate modes of behaviour for those who visited men of honour.[100] An honour ritual which concerned all social groups was seating within churches. A man's pew position in a church reflected his social status within his local community. The closer to the altar, the greater the honour a man held. So in 1637 when church seats were redistributed in a church in Tisbury, Wiltshire, they were done so according to the "ranks, qualities and conditions" of parishioners.[101] Pew seating could prove to be a very contentious issue, and men frequently argued over where they ranked on this highly visible scale of honour. In the early seventeenth century Thomas Fraunceis of Gerberstone, Somerset was highly offended when his claim to seats in the north aisle of West Buckland church was challenged by the Ley brothers who were clothiers "of mean and obscure

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[98] Heal, Hospitality, p.13-14; Heal and Holmes, The Gentry, p.3-6; Heal, 'Hospitality and Honour'; F. Heal, 'Public Reputation in Country and Court: the Case of the Hoby Family' Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, (forthcoming); Manning, Hunters and Poachers, p.228-229; for more examples of attempts to discredit public figures by alleging sexual misconduct see Fox, 'Ballads, Libels', pp.49-51,56,57 footnote 16.

[99] See for example, Fletcher,'Honour, Reputation', p.97.

[100] Courtin, Rules of Civility; Gailhard The Compleat Gentleman; see also Bryson, 'Concepts of Civility', p.109.

[101] Ingram, Church Courts, p.112.

parentage".[102] Some thought in Swaffham, Norfolk in 1636 that the seat Robert Theodorick had been given was too high for him "he being an oatmeal maker and a man of no great credit".[103] In one contemporary ballad a wife tells her new husband that he should look upon his marriage favourably because it will allow him a higher position in the church,

> His wife shall then be seated
> in Church at her desire,
> Her Husband he is a sideman,
> and sits within the Quire,
> Then he is made Churchwarden;
> and placed somewhat higher:
> Great joy to a married young man.
>
> Then seeing all this credit
> by marriage you do find,
> Unto your wife tis reason,
> you should be good and kind.[104]

Whilst in this ballad it appears that the husband and wife sit separately, James has argued that the usual practice in Durham parishes was for the head of household to sit with his family and servants.[105] However, at about Whitsuntide 1634 a dispute broke out in the Durham parish of West Bowden whilst a group of male parishioners sat drinking and waiting for the wood to arrive for the repair of church seats. They started to argue about "the placing of the parishioners there", and some suggested that it would be "convenient for the women to sit by themselves". Robert Atchinson strongly rejected this idea, saying that it would only allow Richard Clay to "make them all Cuckolds meaning...the married men of Bolden."[106] From this case it would seem that pew seating was not only concerned with the

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102 As cited in Underdown, Revel, Riot, p.22, for pew disputes see also pp.14,29-33.
103 Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.212-214.
104 'The Lamentation of a new married man', Euing, p.380-381.
105 James, Family, Lineage and Civil Society, p.121-123.
106 DDR.Box, no.414,(1633-34), Richard Clay v. Robert Atchinson.

display of honour, but also could involve its protection. Even within a church men could feel that their sexual reputation was at stake, and Robert Atchinson needed to sit with his wife to feel secure of his honour.[107]

Another important ritual of honour in this society was pledging. According to the Oxford English Dictionary pledging was "an assurance of allegiance or goodwill attested by drinking in response to another; the drinking of health to a person, a toast."[108] Pledging was a popular practice in the seventeenth century. The ballad 'Match me this Wedding' published between 1636 and 1641 features men passing a cup of drink around and taking turns to toast their women. [109] John Evelyn noted the English custom "to drink to everyone at the Table" in 1659.[110] It was chiefly a male activity: Mirabell in Congreve's The Way of the World (1700) defended pledging, telling the women that they should no account "encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows."[111]

Pledging could be a useful means of settling a dispute as the parties ended their differences in a drink.[112] But it was refusal to pledge someone which could lead to trouble. As Courtin had reminded his gentry audience, if a man drank your health "'tis your duty to pledge him".[113] At a gathering of neighbours at Longhorsley in Northumberland in March 1606 William Johnson took up a cup of ale and offered to drink to Thomas Bolton. But Bolton answered that in return "he would not pledge him for some causes known to himself". In Johnson's eyes, by rejecting the

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107 For men making each other cuckolds see below, p.172-177.
108 OED; Clark, The English Alehouse, p.156.
109 'Match me this Wedding', Roxburghe, (1636-41),vol.II, p.178-182.
110 J. Evelyn, A Character of England, (London,1659), p.36-37.
111 As cited in Woodbridge, Women, p.235.
112 For this form of pledging see below, p.202-203.
113 Courtin, The Rules of Civility, p.108.

offer of a pledge Bolton was showing that he did not respect the goodwill which he had proffered. Deemed unworthy and humiliated in front of his neighbours, Johnson responded to this challenge of reputation by slandering Bolton. He claimed that he was "sorry that he had drunk to any such she Carle as he was and further said to him that he was a Rogue, and a thief and a murderer". A Carle is a Northumbrian word for a peasant or clown; by calling Bolton a she carle he was using both a sexual and a social insult. Johnson then claimed that Bolton had paid a man to cut the throat of his first wife, and that he would pay again to kill his second wife.[114] Such a torrent of abuse shows how seriously Johnson interpreted Bolton's refusal to reciprocate his pledge.

Johnson's words, and Bolton's subsequent action for defamation in Durham consistory court must also be partly explained by who was present when they quarrelled. In this case they were surrounded by "divers other Neighbours". In other cases it is the quality or honour of those who hear the insult which is significant, so that honour was, as Robert Ashley defined it, the praise of the "better sort".[115] It appears that a man's dishonour may have increased in proportion to the social status of those who were present when he was shamed. So, for example, Matthew Hinde told Nicholas Briggs that "he had wronged him very greatly" when Nicholas had called him a "drunken fellow", for he had done so at a dinner party at Littleburn in the presence of Sir John Calverley. Matthew asked Nicholas "what reason he had to slander him in such sort as he had done and that before such a worthy man as the said Sir Calverley".[116] So when William Patteson was accused of being a "mainsworne man" by Agnes Norrish, it was noted by

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114 J. Wright (ed.), The English Dialect Dictionary (London,1898); DDR.V.8.f.155-156r; for a similar dispute arising from pledging see S.D. Amussen, 'The Gendering of Popular Culture in Early Modern England', in T. Harris (ed.), Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1850 (London,1995), p.63-64.
115 Ashley, Of Honour, p.36.
116 DDR.V.10B.ff.335-336,338,342v-343r.

witnesses that it was in the town court of Newcastle in front of the "Mayor, aldermen, sheriff and Jurors and many more."[117] In 1624 Henry Collins of Winscombe, Somerset, a wealthy clothier and constable, was victim to a series of mocking rhymes which he claimed were deliberately sung in front of "the better sort" of the neighbours. The rhymes claimed that he was a bad debtor and that he had committed adultery with many women. The result was that he was shunned from his "better" neighbours, unable to operate his trade, and since his wife believed the rumours of his infidelities, she became "frantic".[118] In another case in April 1625, Michael Heworth was the unfortunate victim of slander at a meeting of " the whole Corporation" of Gateshead. Richard Grame called Michael "a backbiting busy fellow and not fit to come in any honest man's company".[119] Richard's insult boldly suggested what the consequence of Michael's dishonour should be: exclusion from the society of all the honourable men belonging to the corporation.

What these cases show, is that although sexual behaviour was not invariably invoked during quarrels between men, a man's reputation in its widest sense depended on his honesty or probity in all aspects of his character. If a man was to have the honour of those below him on the social scale, and the respect of those who were his social equals or betters, then the integrity of his sexual reputation needed to be without question. Without that integrity no claim to status or prestige within his community could be sustained.

5.5 Paternity

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[117] DDR.V.11.f.225-226r.
[118] Fox, 'Ballads, Libels', p.75.
[119] DDR.V.11.ff.397v-399r.

Jokes about unchaste women bearing illegitimate children are abundant within ballad literature of the seventeenth century. Their comedy centres on the foolish gallant or husband who ends up supporting a child which is not his own. In 'The Jolly Widdower' the man warns bachelors against marriage, telling them that when he was married "I often rock'd another man's child".[120] Maids pretend virginity and trick young men into marriage or into maintaining a bastard in both 'Children after the rate of 24 in a year', and 'The Country Girl's Policy'.[121] The chorus of the former ballad runs,

> Rock the Cradle, rock the Cradle,
> rock the cradle John,
> There's many a man rocks the cradle,
> when the child's none of his own.[122]

Evidence from separation cases suggests that in reality men took this consequence of their failure to sexually control their future brides or wives very seriously. For even though legal theory held that all children born by a married woman were legitimate, in practice when the paternity of a child was in doubt rightful inheritance of property was immediately at stake.[123] It becomes obvious why so many contemporary writers described adultery as an act of theft when we understand that bastards were thought likely to rob other children of estate and property. The double standard of morality is justified because the consequence of a woman's adultery is that,

> she may bring into her Husband's house strange children, to wipe her husband's own children's nose of their share in his goods, and falsify all

120 'The Jolly Widdower', Pepys, vol.IV, p.102.
121 'Children after the rate of 24 in a year', Pepys (c.1635), vol.I, p.404-405; 'The Country Girl's Policy', Roxburghe, (c.1765),vol.VII, part II, p.286-287; for another example see 'If every Woman were serv'd in her kind', in T. D'Urfey, Wit and Mirth, (London,1699), Part II, p.110-112.
122 'Children after the rate of 24 in a year', Pepys (c.1635), vol.I, p.404-405.
123 MacFarlane, Marriage and Love in England, p.242.

whatsoever.[124]

Women's power to disrupt the rightful inheritance of property by mixing it with blood of lower social status was recognised by John Taylor, the Water Poet,

> The greatest females underneath the sky
> Are but frail vessels of mortality...
> Lust enters, and my lady proves a whore:
> And so a bastard to the world may come,
> Perhaps begotten by some stable groom;
> Whom the fork-headed, her cornuted knight
> May play and dandle with, with great delight,
> And thus by one misbegotten son,
> Gentility in a wrong line may run:
> And thus foul lust to worship may prefer
> The mongrel issue of a fruiterer.[125]

An illegitimate child could also be regarded as the long-term living proof of a husband's shame. Even if ideas of inherited lineal honour were being gradually replaced by those that placed more emphasis on individual virtue, concern about illegitimate children shows that the concept of inherited dishonour continued.[126] As Gibbon wrote in 1594, "An ill Name doth not only disparage and impeach the Agent, but such as be allied to him; not only the party, but his progenitors, and such as belong or be anyway derived from his lineage."[127] When Hermione in The Winter's Tale (c.1609) stands trial for adultery she points straight to her husband's concerns about his succession when she recognises of honour, "' Tis a derivative from me to mine".[128]

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124 I. Benvenuto, The Passenger, (London,1612), as cited in R. Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana,1956), p.99.
125 J. Taylor, Workes, ii,52, as cited in Capp, The World of John Taylor, p.116.
126 See above, chapter two.
127 Gibbon, The Praise of a Good Name, p.15.
128 Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale (c.1609), III,ii,44.

It is little wonder, given this context of ideas, that when Alexander Denton discovered that his wife had suffered a miscarriage when he claimed not to have had sex with her for eight or nine months, he visited her bedside, "and asked how she could offer to do herself and him so much injury".[129] In November 1696 the Earl of Macclesfield was concerned by reports that his wife was pregnant for a second time with an illegitimate child. He visited her sister, where he suspected his wife was seeking refuge, and tried to persuade her to allow two of his female relations to examine his wife to determine the truth of the claims. The Earl told his wife's sister that if they found that "she was not with Child it would be much to the reputation of his Wife and her Family as well as a great satisfaction to him". The Earl had reason to be concerned when the Countess had born him no children and when the likely fate of his estates was subject to popular gossip. For despite the Countess' attempts to remain anonymous during the birth of her children by wearing a mask, her infidelity to the Earl appears to have been widely known. The midwife and other female attendants were reported to have speculated that her child "if a Boy would be a great Heir". It is unsurprising that on hearing that his wife could be pregnant the Earl admitted to his own sister that he had "no mind to make a Noise about it".[130] Husbands such as the Earl may well have found a sympathetic audience in the all male environment of the courtroom. In 1656 during a parliamentary debate on divorce, members favoured giving Edward Scot a divorce based on his accusations of his wife's adultery, even though he was mentally unstable, since "it is fit the gentleman should be relieved, that bastards

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129 CA,Case 2730,(1688),Ee7, f.18v.
130 CA,Case 5938,(1697),Eee8, ff.421-425, 434v, 449r.

may not inherit his estate". Another member agreed, arguing "it is a sad case to have such a wife and to have a posterity put upon him that is none of his own."[131]

Once pregnancy became visible it could provoke severe anger from husbands who were suspicious of being cuckolded. Hence when William Younger met his wife in a street in Wapping after they had been informally separated for around seven years, he became violent when he saw she was pregnant. He hit her on the belly, called her "Greenwaye's whore" and cried "what more bastards coming to Town ... telling her that it was none of his". His anger and violence attracted the attention of shopkeepers who sent for constables, but William followed his wife through the streets and attacked her again. This time he claimed that she had another bastard which she "buried in the kitchen", and threatened to see her hanged for this crime.[132] William's public beating of his wife was probably partly designed to ensure that his neighbours would not hold him responsible for maintaining his wife's child. Similarly, after two years of marriage James Whiston claimed "in a loud voice in the open street" that his wife "was with a child by another man and not by him, that he would therefore be divorced from her."[133]

But whilst at first sight pregnancy would appear to provide powerful grounds for marriage separation compared with trying to gain witnesses to adultery which was in flagrante delicto, proving that a child had not been conceived in wedlock was in

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131 J.T. Rutt (ed.), Diary of Thomas Burton, Member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell (4 vols, London,1828), vol.1, p.204-206, as cited in Crawford, 'The construction and experience', in Fildes (ed.), Women as Mothers, p.10.

132 CA,Case 10406,(1671),Eee4, ff.512-519.

133 CA,Case 9870,(1669),Eee3, f.547.

fact fraught with difficulty. One of the greatest pitfalls of a male honour system which rested on female chastity was that it depended on women's words. For as the Roman jurist Gaius recognised, "Maternity is a fact. Paternity is a merely an opinion."[134] When Leontes first suspects his wife of infidelity in The Winter's Tale (c.1609) he turns to his son and heir to the throne and asks, "Mamillius, Art thou my boy ?" He stares at Mamillius and remembers that women have said that they share looks, that the boy's nose is "a copy out of mine." But Leontes realizes with horror that although "women say so", women "will say anything".[135] Similarly, when Miranda learns of her noble origins in The Tempest (c.1611) she asks Prospero, "Sir, are you not my father?". To this Prospero can only provide limited assurance, for he too depended on his wife's word: "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and / She said thou wast my daughter" he replies.[136] In reality a Norfolk man complained "that he had paid for eleven church goings [the thanksgiving after childbirth], but God knew who was the father of his children."[137] Women, who were in the popular mind so easily capable of deception, had the power to make a mockery of an inheritance system which by primogeniture was intended to ensure that land was passed legitimately from one male to the next. As Calvin had warned, "What else will remain safe in human society if licence be given to bring in by stealth the offspring of a stranger? to steal a name which may be given to spurious offspring? and to transfer to them property taken away from lawful heirs?"[138] That the pregnant and adulterous Countess of Macclesfield was

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134 As cited in L. Stone, 'Honor, Morals, Religion, and the Law: The Action for Criminal Conversation in England, 1670-1857', in A. Grafton and A. Blair (eds), The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe (Philadelphia,1990), p.282.
135 Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609), I,ii,119-146; see also D. Schalkwyk, "'A Lady's 'Verily' is as Potent as a Lord's': Women, Word and Witchcraft in The Winter's Tale', English Literary Renaissance, vol.22, no.2, (1992), p.242-272.
136 Shakespeare, The Tempest, (c.1611), I,ii,55-57; K.E. Maus, 'Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender and Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama', ELH, vol.54, no.3, (1987), p.561.
137 As cited in Amussen 'The Gendering', in Harris (ed.), Popular Culture, p.58.
138 As cited in Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery', p.262.

supposedly advised by her friends to pretend that her husband had "met her in the Streets, and carried her to a Tavern and there lay with her and had a Child by her", shows how easily women could fabricate stories about the paternity of their children.[139]

It seems probable that men at the upper end of the social scale would have been more sensitive and wary of consequences of sexual dishonour which threatened legitimate inheritance than those from the lower orders. After all, for the gentry there was more land and property at stake. There does seem to have been a commonplace in this society, stemming from the Biblical precedent, "Look how the mighty have fallen", that because the upper orders had more in material terms to lose by dishonour their 'fall' and shame would be proportionately greater. D'Avolos in Ford's Love's Sacrifice (c.1632) comments on the fate of the cuckold that "Wherein do princes exceed the poorest peasant that ever was yoked to a sixpenny strumpet but that the horns of one are mounted some two inches higher by a choppine than the other?" [140] The fall of a great man would be of such magnitude that it would be visible to all.

5.6 Conclusions

This chapter has shown that for men of all social groups, loss of sexual reputation had profound and serious consequences. Without the sexual control of his wife, all other attempts of a husband to rule his marriage partner would be futile, leaving him to be exposed as the husband of a scold as well as that of an adulteress. A variety of community rituals directed at the couple made it clear that ultimately it

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[139] CA,Case 5938,(1697),Eee8, f.474v.
[140] J. Ford, Love's Sacrifice (c.1632), II,iii; a choppine was a clog worn under the shoe.

was always the man who was at fault for the breakdown in familial order. The cuckold's role and status within the community was also made vulnerable by his wife's behaviour. For the upper sorts, who frequently held offices of public and political importance, and whose position continued to depend at least partly on the integrity of their lineage, the damage that loss of sexual reputation could incur must have appeared most acute.

CHAPTER SIX: DEFENDING MALE HONOUR

6.1 Introduction

Let Husbands take care of their Wives, if that they are mindful of Fame.[1]

The sexual control of women in the seventeenth century was vital both in the wider sphere to the preservation of patriarchy, and at the grassroots level to the reputations of individual men. Ballads, satire and drama provided a context in which men learnt that their reputations depended on their wives' behaviour. Popular rituals which taunted the cuckold were painful reminders of what faced those men who did not fulfil their prescribed gender roles. In these circumstances, many men must have felt pressure to tailor their behaviour to conform to this culture of honour, and feared what might follow if they were seen to fail in their endeavours to conform. A seventeenth century proverb aptly described the anxiety of men's position: "Honour and ease are seldom bedfellows".[2] This chapter explores the ways in which men's everyday relationships with each other and their wives may have been shaped by their anxious desire to be held honourable.

6.2 Male Friendships

It has been shown elsewhere that male friends played an important role in a man's social life before marriage. In village society the alehouse was the focal point for male fellowship and the approval of friends was sought in the choice of lover or marriage partner.[3] Alan Bray has found in the Elizabethan period that men as

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[1] 'Hey for Horn-Fair', Roxburghe, (1685),vol.VIII, part III, p.665-666.
[2] Tilley, A Dictionary, H568.
[3] See above, pp.68-70,73.

friends could openly express love for each other in letters, and share close physical intimacy by becoming 'bedfellows'.[4]

It becomes evident from a number of literary sources, however, that the male friendships of childhood and adolescence were idealized to contrast with the heterosexual relationships which most men formed upon sexual maturity. The ballads of the period present unmarried life as a time free from the worries of pleasing a wife and the responsibilities of providing for a family. One typical ballad within this genre 'Advice to Batchelors; Or, The Married Man's Lamentation' begins,

> You batchelors that single are
> may lead a happy life;
> For married men are full of care,
> and women oft breed strife.[5]

Polixenes in The Winter's Tale (c.1609) remembers his childhood friendship with Leontes as a time when,

> We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
> And bleat the one at th'other : what we chang'd
> Was innocence for innocence. [6]

The closeness of male childhood friends is also expressed by Othello who, when Cassio's drunken behaviour disturbs him from his marriage bed, promises punishment on the culprit, even if he was "twinn'd" with him from birth.[7] Male friendships were also described with fond recollection in Montaigne's sixteenth

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[4] Bray, 'Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship', p.1-19.
[5] ' Advice to Batchelors', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.376-379; see also 'The Batchelor's Delight' Roxburghe, vol.III, p.423-426; 'The Lamentation of a new married man' Pepys, (c.1630), vol.I, p.380-381; and 'The Batchelor's Triumph', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.427-429.
[6] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609),I,ii,67-69.
[7] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),I,iii,203.

century essay 'On Friendship' as "souls that mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them."[8]

But with marriage men's attentions shifted away from their male friends to their wives as they became eager to gain honour by exhibiting sexual prowess and control. A man's sexual potency became all important, and only men with "every Husbands proper sign" could enter the adult world of male relationships.[9] So when Horner in The Country Wife (1675) pretends to be a eunuch he is excluded from the homosocial world. Sir Jaspar Fidget leaves Horner with his female kin whilst he mixes with other men and attends to his business. Male friendships are changed profoundly with maturity because instead of the equality of childhood ("innocence for innocence"), men become competitors and potential rivals. Within the adult world of sexual politics it is men who betray and cuckold other men.[10] Ironically then, whilst men had a common interest in the preservation of patriarchy, this was within a political arena in which men were engaged in a power struggle against each other for honour. Friendship could just become a means of getting closer to a man's wife,

> a rival is the best
> cloak to steal a mistress under, without suspicion;
> and when we have once got to her as we desire, we
> throw him off like other cloaks. [11]

In drama any man who trusts his friend with his wife is shown to be mistaken. Hence in The Country Wife Sparkish's belief that his best friend, Harcourt will be

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[8] As cited in D. Sherrod, 'The Bonds of Men: Problems and Possibilities in Close Male Relationships', in H. Brod (ed.), The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies (Boston,1987),p.230.
[9] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),III,ii, 205; H. Burke, 'Wycherley's 'Tendentious Joke': The Discourse of Alterity in The Country Wife' The Eighteenth Century - Theory and Interpretation, vol.29,no.3, (1988), p.235.
[10] See Kahn, Man's Estate, pp.120,144,150.
[11] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),III,ii,189-192.

able to act as a reconciler in "the differences of the marriage bed" without becoming emotionally or sexually involved with his fiancee is shown to be naive and foolish.[12] Indeed, Horner argues that friendship and love of women cannot mix because ultimately a man will always betray his friend rather than resist the woman.[13]

The risk of being cuckolded and losing honour to one's friend raised a dilemma for men of how to adjust their male friendships to married life. One particular problem was how a husband should entertain his friends when they came to stay. It has already been shown that offering hospitality was an important way for men to gain and display honour.[14] Yet acting as a host also made a man vulnerable to losing his honour. A common theme of the drama of the early seventeenth century was that male guests who enter the home of a married couple could be disruptive both to the husband/friend relationship and the husband/wife bond. In Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603) Wendoll causes disaster in the Frankford marriage; Othello's friendship with Cassio has tragic consequences; and Fernando is the Duke's friend who disrupts his marriage in Ford's Love's Sacrifice (c.1632).[15] The husband and his friend have to accommodate a female presence in their relationship when before there was none. There can be a history of emotional attachment between two men of which the wife is ignorant. Hence, Hermione in The Winter's Tale, for example, has to enquire about the childhood games and friendship between her husband and Polixenes.[16] But questioning does not necessarily lead to an understanding of the intricacies of a relationship, so that a wife's involvement in her husband's friendships can easily be resented. Othello

[12] Ibid., III,ii,361-364.
[13] Ibid., I,i,222-225; V,iv,432-3.
[14] See above, p.35-36.
[15] L.J. Mills, One Soul in Bodies Twain : Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama (Bloomington, Indiana, 1937); Gutierrez, 'The Irresolution of Melodrama', p.275-276; P. Erikson, Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama (London,1985).
[16] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609),I,ii,60-62,65-66.

becomes increasingly irritated when Desdemona interferes with his relationship with Cassio by pleading on his behalf.[17]

Most significantly, however, a male friend within the household can cause tensions between a husband and his wife. The woman has a difficult role to play in both obeying her husband and pleasing the guest. Hermione in The Winter's Tale plays her part as hostess too well and by persuading her guest to stay causes Leontes to be jealous. Despite their years of friendship, Hermione has a greater power of persuasion over Polixenes than Leontes.[18]

Clearly a key problem for a wife was how far she should or could extend her friendship to her husband's friend. The drama of the period shows that the idea of a husband and wife having mutual friends appears impossible. In Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603), on the arrival of his friend Frankford orders his wife Anne to "Use him with all thy loving'st courtesy". Anne immediately foresees the difficulty of obeying her husband when she replies,

> As far as modesty may well extend,
> It is my duty to receive your friend. [19]

The greatest risk that faced a husband was if his friend decided not to reciprocate hospitality by behaving in an honourable way. Instead, as portrayed in A Woman Killed with Kindness, a friend could abuse his position as guest and exploit the uncertainties of the wife/host role by committing adultery, repaying kindness with horns.

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[17] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),III,iii,42-90.
[18] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609), I,ii,28-87.
[19] Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness, (1603),iv,80-82.

Several court cases of the period show that the fears of betrayal by friends depicted in drama could be shared by men in reality. Grace Ball responded to her husband's accusations of adultery in 1609 by explaining that he had insisted that she welcome his friends into his house. He then would become jealous if he perceived that "she was over-familiar with them". If she tried to avoid confrontation by keeping out of their company, he would "quarrel with her because she did not bid them welcome." Grace tried to show the court the difficulties she faced living with a husband whose jealousy meant that he drew a fine line between her showing due hospitality and playing the whore.[20] Both Edmund Clarke in 1676, and Alexander Denton in 1688, accused their wives of adultery with men who they had introduced as their friends. Their wives denied the charges and defended their actions by claiming that they had only entertained the men as their husband's guests. Martha Clarke said that her husband told her that Mr. Millington was his friend, and that she was commanded to be "civil" to him. When her husband also introduced Mr. Conigsby as a kinsman, and willed her to "respect him accordingly", Martha said she behaved only "as became her to do to a friend of her said Husband."[21] Similarly, when Hester Denton was accused of adultery with one Thomas Smith, she claimed that Thomas was frequently at their house because he was a close friend of her husbands'. She argued that Thomas and her husband often hunted together, went to the horse races, and spent much time with each other's families. Their friendship was so intimate that she claimed that if they spent any time apart her husband became "very uneasy and dissatisfied". In this context, it could only be part of Hester's duties as a good wife to entertain her husband's friend.[22]

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[20] Gowing, 'Women', p.197.
[21] CA,Case 1888,(1676),Ee4, f.467.
[22] CA,Case 2730,(1688),Ee7, ff.35-38.

Some men are shown in drama to enjoy 'showing off' their wives to others. Indeed, in The Country Wife (1675) the overly confident Sparkish declares that men should draw sexual energy and excitement from the envy of their male friends,

> the time will come when a rival
> will be as good sauce for a married man to a wife as an
> orange to veal. [23]

In Marriage a la Mode (1671) once Rhodophil and Palamede realize that their partners have the power to attract other men they resolve to renew their acquaintance with the women, since as Rhodophil expresses it to his wife, there must be "something more in ye than I have found".[24]

However, whilst men may have sought the approval of their female partner to gain social honour, by inspiring envy they also ran the risk of promoting lust and subsequently being cuckolded. As Pinchwife in The Country Wife states,

> He that shows his wife or money will be in danger of
> having them borrowed sometimes [25],

and as one ballad warns,

> Envy doth bring,
> The credit of innocent women to sting.[26]

As the next section will show, contrary to those who wished to inspire envy, many men probably would have felt easier taking steps to prevent their wives becoming the centre of attention. The risk of being cuckolded was never far from men's

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[23] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),IV,iii,394-6.
[24] Dryden, Marriage a la Mode, (1671),V,340-346.
[25] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),III,ii,370-371.
[26] M.P.,'The Married Man's Lesson', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.231-236.

minds. If a man desired honour it required him to consider not only his behaviour towards his wife, but also to adjust his attitude to this boyhood friends.

6.3 Jealousy : Fictional Evidence

As jealousy could have been interpreted as a sign of weakness - an admission that a man feared that he was losing the sexual control of his wife - men were unlikely to admit to such an emotion in any public forum.[27] Instead, historians are left with evidence of the actions of jealous men, or the conduct which was the consequence of this emotion, within the court records of marriage separation which women brought on grounds of cruelty. These men exhibited what has been termed as reactive jealousy; actions taken once they became convinced that their wives had committed adultery. This behaviour will be discussed fully in the next chapter.[28]

If we are to put these actions in their context, we need to reach to their psychological roots. Playwrights of this period devoted considerable thought to the causes and consequences of male jealousy. They display it as chiefly a male characteristic which originates from men's' concern to adhere to honour codes which lay emphasis on male control of women. For women such as Alithea in The Country Wife (1675) jealousy has become such a common tendency of men that are in love, that if a man does not exhibit jealousy his true intentions are placed in doubt. She is concerned at Sparkish's "want of jealousy" when she spends time with Harcourt. She has been told that jealousy is the "only infallible sign" of love, and suspects that because Sparkish is not jealous, "you care not for me nor who

[27] Men were also unwilling to admit to jealousy in the French courts, see Davis, Fiction in the Archives, p.83.
[28] See below, p.213-224; the term reactive jealousy is explained in P.Van Sommers, Jealousy (London,1988), pp.80,86.

has me."[29] If a man loved a wife, and had concern for his honour it is shown as only natural that he should fear losing her.

In contrast, a man who is married to a jealous wife is open to mockery. By allowing their lives to be controlled by their wives these men have surrendered all claims to male honour. One typical ballad within this genre tells the story of John Tomson who is married to a jealous and possessive wife. When John is out with his friends his neighbours tease him by pretending that his wife can see him, and then laugh at him when he looks fearful. For seven years he has lived with her but she has remained suspicious and scolds him frequently.[30] Men such as John Tomson who tolerate their wives' jealousy are labelled as henpecked.[31] In Etherege's She Would if She Could (1667/8) Sir Oliver's hesitancy as he enters an alehouse to meet whores, and his fears of his wife's discovery, make him a feeble and comic figure.[32]

We learn from drama that much of a jealous man's imagination centres upon forming images of his wife's betrayal, and in particular upon the image of the rival making love to his wife before him. When Othello first believes that his wife has betrayed him he starts to visualize the "stol'n hours of lust" and "Cassio's kisses on her lips".[33] After Othello's demand to Iago to "Make me see't", Iago encourages him to imagine Cassio making love to Desdemona. He recalls the words Cassio uttered in his sleep, and says that Cassio has boasted of "lying" with Desdemona. The latter triggers Othello's outburst,

> Lie with her, lie on her ? - We say lie on her, when

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[29] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675),III,ii,253; II,i,231-232; III,ii,249-250.
[30] ' John Tomson and Jakaman his Wife', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.137-142.
[31] See for example, 'The Henpeckt Cuckold', Roxburghe, (c.1689-91), vol.VII, part II, p.432.
[32] G. Etherege, She Would if She Could, (1667/8),III,iii,57-63.
[33] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),III,iii,344,347.

they belie her, - lie with her, zounds, that's fulsome ![34],

with each repetition forming a clearer picture in his mind of the sexual act he finds so nauseating. Leontes in The Winter's Tale does not need an Iago figure to give rise to his jealousy; he imagines Polixenes as "Sir Smile" who in his absence "sluic'd" his wife, opened his "gate" and "fish'd" his "pond".[35] "A jealous man's horns hang in his eyes", taught one proverb, for a jealous man could not see anything else but his imagined cuckold's status.[36]

Given that, as one ballad puts it, "There's no greater plague th[a]n imagined horns" why did men allow their imagination to centre upon such horrifying sexual images?[37] In Othello the perceptive Emilia states of jealousy,

'tis a monster,
Begot upon itself, and born on itself,

and Iago declares of his actions to Othello,

I told him what I thought, and told no more
Than what he found himself was apt and true.[38]

Jealousy stems from a man's insecurity about himself and from his innermost fears and anxieties. Orgilus recognises in Ford's The Broken Heart (c.1629) that Bassanes' fears about his wife's fidelity arise "out of a self-unworthiness".[39] Similarly, when the writer William Heale tried to explain men's behaviour he

[34] Ibid.,III,iii,370,419-432; IV,i,35-36.
[35] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609),I,ii,194-198; see also D. Cohen, 'Patriarchy and Jealousy in Othello and The Winter's Tale', Modern Language Quarterly, vol.48, no.3, (1987), p.207-223.
[36] Tilley, A Dictionary, M465.
[37] M.P.,'The Married Man's Lesson',Roxburghe, vol.III, p.231-236.
[38] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604),III,iv,159-160; V,ii,177-178.
[39] Ford, The Broken Heart (c.1629), I,i,68.

concluded that, "Jealousy is a child conceived of self-unworthiness, and of anothers worth, at whose birth fear made it an abortive in nature, and a monster in love."[40] Thus Othello, through Iago's scheming, experiences feelings of fear and inadequacy when he compares himself with Cassio. Cassio is a "proper man" who to Othello appears to have many of the qualities which he lacks.[41] He has verbal ability and social sophistication which Othello cannot parallel. Although Othello can boast of military achievement, he knows he is "rude" in speech,

> for I am black
> And have not those soft parts of conversation
> That chamberers have [42]

Cassio's physical appearance also contrasts with Othello's blackness, for Cassio is "fram'd to make women false".[43] Ultimately, it is Cassio's qualities which make Othello fear being a cuckold, not those of Desdemona. Desdemona never commits adultery, and the words of the Restoration playwright Wycherley, could well apply to Othello, "cuckolding, like the smallpox, comes with a fear".[44] Heale believed that it was this fear that led men to "obtain the full sight and perfect assurance of our own misery", and another contemporary thought that a feature of jealousy was that it "labours to seek out what it hopes it shall not find".[45] So men anticipated their worst fears about being cuckolded by picturing or imagining them.

Jealousy is shown to be an emotion which can develop from faint suspicion to morbid or pathological jealousy. It can manifest itself by a man taking measures which he believes will prevent his wife from committing adultery. Jealousy in this

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[40] Heale, An Apology for Women, p.34.
[41] Shakespeare, Othello,(c.1604),I,iii,390; for the meaning of "proper man" see above, p.80-81.
[42] Ibid, I,iii,81; III,iii,267-269.
[43] Ibid, I,iii,396.
[44] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675), IV,iv,74.
[45] Heale, An Apology, p.34; Niccholes, A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving, p.45.

sense became essentially a defensive posture.[46] Playwrights of the period satirized the actions of these jealous husbands. Bassanes in The Broken Heart (c.1629) orders the window next to the street to be boarded up because he thinks it "gives too full a prospect to temptation" for his wife.[47] The suitably named Pinchwife in The Country Wife (1675) locks his wife in the house and will only let her walk through the town if she puts on men's clothes.[48]

Pathological jealousy occurs when a husband suffers from severe delusions about his wife's behaviour and neurotically seeks evidence to 'prove' what he already 'knows' to be true.[49] Jealousy is shown to be painful until 'proven'; Othello talks of the pain on his forehead as he thinks of the cuckold's horns, and he wishes Iago had not told him of his suspicions as they have set him "on the rack" and "torture" him.[50] In one ballad jealousy is said to be worse than the pains of hell, and in another it is compared with "tormenting Lice, or Fleas".[51] As Lisa Jardine writes, "Jealousy is the humiliating condition of *doubt* in relation to your own honour and your wife's obedience."[52] The only way that men can seek an end to this agony is to find the 'truth',

> I'll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove,
> And on the proof, there is no more but this:
> Away at once with love or jealousy ! [53]

But in their search for proof men are often overhasty and misled by their suspicions. Both Othello and Leontes misinterpret small signs or gestures as confirmation of their suspicions. Leontes sees Hermione's "paddling

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[46] Van Sommers, Jealousy, pp.80,86.
[47] Ford, The Broken Heart, (c.1629),II,i,1-8.
[48] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675), III,ii.
[49] Van Sommers, Jealousy, pp.150,157.
[50] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604), III,iii,288;341;374.
[51] 'All such as lead a jealous life',Shirburn, LXIV, p.263-267; 'Household Talk', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.441-446.
[52] L. Jardine,"Why should he call her whore ?",p.143, the italics are Jardine's.
[53] Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604), III,iii,194-196.

palms...pinching fingers...and making practis'd smiles" with Polixenes as an indication of her betrayal.[54] "My life stands in the level of your dreams" says Hermione to her husband.[55] For Othello a missing handkerchief becomes confirmation of Desdemona's guilt, proving as Iago recognises that,

> trifles light as air
> Are to the jealous, confirmations strong
> As proofs of holy writ.[56]

Bassanes and Pinchwife are made to look ridiculous, and the actions of Othello and Leontes are shown to be without reason. A man's behaviour changes with the development of jealousy, and as it does so it becomes more and more destructive to honour. Jealousy could destroy a man's honour because it led to irrational behaviour. The most frequent simile used in conjunction with jealousy is that it is like a disease or madness. Alice accused her "jealous harebrain" husband of behaving like a "frantic man" in Arden of Faversham (c.1591); Falstaff says that Ford has "the finest mad devil of jealousy in him...that ever governed frenzy" in The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597); and Paulina says Leontes is mad for accusing Hermione of adultery in The Winter's Tale (c.1609).[57] In a period when reason was regarded as the touchstone of manhood, a man possessed of such an affliction could not be thought honourable. In Ford's The Broken Heart (c.1629) Bassanes' jealous behaviour towards his wife is described as "lunacy" by one witness. Bassanes' jealousy is so excessive that he even accuses Ithocles, his wife's brother, of cuckolding him. Ithocles believes that this can only show that Bassanes' jealousy "has robbed him of his wits". Once Bassanes has lost control of reason,

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[54] Ibid.,I,ii,115-116.
[55] Ibid.,III,ii,81.
[56] Ibid.,III,iii,327-329.
[57] Anon, Arden of Faversham, (c.1591), xiii,88-105; Wycherley, The Country Wife (1675), IV,iii,306; Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor, (1597),V,i,18-19; Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609), II,ii,29;III,71,118.

Ithocles argues that he is an unfit husband to govern a wife, and promises that he will only return his sister,

> When you shall show good proof that manly wisdom,
> Not overswayed by passion, or opinion,
> Knows how to lead your judgement.[58]

Hence the success of Iago's plan. He can dishonour Othello simply by inspiring him to be jealous; no adultery need take place. Horner explains to Pinchwife when they discuss women that a cuckold and a jealous husband can be subject to the same degree of public dishonour for,

> if she cannot make her husband a cuckold, she'll
> make him jealous, and pass for one, and then 'tis all one.[59]

So for example, in The Merry Wives of Windsor, far from his jealousy preventing his dishonour, Ford's behaviour of attempting to surprise his wife in the act of adultery only renders him a ludricious figure and a fool who is fit for laughter, and undeserving of social honour. In The Winter's Tale Leontes also loses his honour through his jealousy. Paulina says that Leontes' "weak-hing'd fancy" of jealousy which led him to slander his wife will make him "ignoble" and "scandalous to the world."[60]

If at this point we briefly turn to husbands' statements in marriage separation cases, we find evidence that men were sensitive to accusations of jealousy. These men did not want to be thought of as the Bassanes or Pinchwives of their local community. When Captain Charles Skelton returned from sea and heard reports that his wife had been unfaithful, he claimed that "he had so good an opinion of her

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[58] Ford, The Broken Heart, (c.1629),III,ii,182-184.
[59] Wycherley, The Country Wife,(1675), I,i,434-435.
[60] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609),II,iii,118-120.

that he could no ways believe the same".[61] Similarly, Thomas Earl of Stamford argued in 1686 that although he was told that his wife had engaged in "many lewd embraces...yet he had that love and honour for her that he did give no faith or credit to the reports".[62] Several husbands appeared to be eager to deny that their jealousy had affected their wives' liberty; in 1674 John Turner of Swanwick, Derbyshire said that he had never confined his wife to her chamber or charged her "not to stir over the threshold of the said chamber in his absence upon peril of her life". Thomas Rayner claimed that he only put a bolt of his wife's chamber door during the night because he was afraid that she in her anger would set the house on fire, and said that he only locked her in one day when "she had threatened to kill a young girl who then lived with them".[63] After ten years separation in 1585 Lady Willoughby wrote to her husband to try and negotiate coming back to live with him. She told him of rumours she had heard that on her return he intended to act as a jealous husband;

> that I should take heed and beware how I come to you again, for you had determined and vowed that if ever you took me again, you would keep me shorter than 'ere I was kept, that you [would] lock and pin me up in a chamber, and that I should not go so much as into the garden to take the air, without your leave and license.

Sir Francis Willoughby angrily replied to this letter, arguing that her letter contained much "that may minister occasion of offence".[64] The label of jealous husband was clearly damaging to male reputation.

Finally, jealousy can cause just what it is trying to prevent as it is portrayed as driving women to adultery. A jealous husband frequently withdraws his affection

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[61] CA,Case 8350,(1673),Ee4, f.302v.
[62] CA,Case 8648,(1686),Ee6, f.110v.
[63] CA,Case 9344,(1674),Ee4, ff.256-283; CA,Case 7550,(1688),Ee6, f.182v-183r.
[64] As cited in A.T. Friedman, 'Portrait of a Marriage: the Willoughby Letters of 1585-1586', Signs, vol.11, (1986), p.551-552.

from his wife. Hermione feels that Leontes' love is gone but she knows "not how it went".[65] Horner in The Country Wife declares that,

> a foolish rival and a jealous husband assist their
> rival's designs; for they are sure to make their women
> hate them, which is the first step to their love for another
> man. [66]

The actions of the jealous husband can be so extreme that they provoke his wife to adultery. Pinchwife's attempts to keep his country wife from the temptations of London society only arouse Margery's curiosity, as Alithea warns, "You suffer none to give her those longings you mean, but yourself."[67] Similarly, in the ballad 'The Discontented Married Man' maids are warned not to marry jealous men because their restrictions on their wives' behaviour will make the women "lose both wit and sense" until they commit adultery.[68] Again, in 'The Married Man's Lesson' the chorus line warns men against jealousy, "for jealousy makes many good women bad."[69] Jealousy in this context is shown to be an ineffective means of control.

Fictional sources show that ideas of male honour were all pervading; they were thought to even shape male imagination and fantasy. However, it was not honourable to admit to jealousy or to be subject to extreme or pathological jealousy. It was just as dishonourable to be out of control with jealousy, as it was to be exposed as a cuckold. Observed all the time by friends and neighbours, men walked a tightrope between losing control of their wives, and showing excessive concern for their chastity which could be labelled as jealousy. A man had to be watchful of his wife to defend his honour, but could never admit to being afraid.

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[65] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, (c.1609), III,ii,95-96.
[66] Wycherley, The Country Wife, (1675), III,ii,58-61.
[67] Ibid., III,i,16-17.
[68] 'The Discontented Married Man',Roxburghe, vol.I, p.295-299.
[69] M.P., 'The Married Man's Lesson', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.231-236.

6.4 Jealousy : A Case Study

Pepys' diary provides a highly valuable insight to the thinking of one seventeenth century married man. As historians we are extremely fortunate that Pepys chose to write about his jealousy of his wife in his diary, an emotion, as we shall see, that he was reluctant to confess to his wife, let alone any of his male friends. One instance of his jealousy was when his wife took dancing lessons with Mr. Pembleton. Pepys recorded his fears about his wife's relationship with Pembleton throughout much of 1663, eight years after his marriage to Elizabeth Pepys. The words recorded in his diary often echo those of the jealous husbands of Shakespeare, Ford and Wycherley.

Pepys confessed that given his own numerous infidelities,"upon a small temptation I could be false to her", he had little right "to expect more justice from her". But his jealousy affected him so profoundly that he was able to dwell upon little else. "Now, so deadly full of jealousy I am, that my heart and head did so cast about and fret, that I could not do any business", he wrote on 15 May 1663. He wrote that the jealousy made him "ready to chide at everything" and led him to many sleepless nights. As his jealousy grew the symptoms became worse, and he realized that it made him think and behave without reason. Pepys described it as "a great disorder"; then a "devilish jealousy [which] makes a very hell in my mind". Finding his wife and Pembleton alone in the house on 26 May "made me almost mad" Pepys confessed. A week later his head ached with jealousy, even though a few days earlier he had realised that his jealousy was "a madness not to be excused".

Pepys' jealousy, like that described by Heale, and acted out by Othello and Leontes, labours to "seek out what it hopes it shall not find".[70] He is twice reduced to "lying

[70] See above, p.180.

to see whether my wife did wear drawers...and other things to raise my suspicion of her": he assumes that if he looks up his wife's skirts and finds that she is properly clothed that he will have no cause to doubt his wife's chastity. He listens to the sounds of his wife and the dancing master moving in the room above his chamber, questions a servant to see whether he is acting as a go-between, and on his return to the house he even goes "to see whether any of the beds were out of order or no".

Pepys was troubled to know what action he should take. When he first became suspicious he made excuses to his wife for his bad temper, "was forced to say that I had bad news from the Duke concerning Tom Hayter as an excuse to my wife". Nine days later he wrote of the dilemma that faced him,

> being unwilling to speak of it to her for making of any breach and other inconveniences, nor let it pass for fear of her continuing to offend me and the matter grow worse thereby.

Not wanting to make matters worse between himself and his wife by admitting he did not trust her, Pepys was also concerned not to appear a wittol cuckold who took no action and became even more open to mockery.[71] To some extent, the situation resolved itself when his wife's course in dancing lessons came to an end, but after experiencing some six weeks of intense jealousy, it is hardly surprising that memories of Pembleton periodically haunted Pepys. A month later he imagined seeing Pembleton in a crowd, and the old symptoms of jealousy came once again to the fore: "Lord, how my blood did rise in my face and I fell into a sweat from my old Jealousy and hate". Matters were not helped by Pembleton's attendance at the same church as the Pepys's. Samuel was suspicious of his wife's intentions whenever she appeared anxious to attend church. On two occasions when he went to church on his own and saw Pembleton enter and leave, he became

[71] For wittol see below, p.230-231.

convinced that it was because Pembleton had plans to visit his wife in his absence, and was forced to hurry home, only to find his fears ill founded. Matters finally improved when on 18 October Elizabeth Pepys introduced her husband to the new wife of Pembleton. It is fascinating how Pepys found Pembleton's marriage reassuring,

> it is strange to see how by use and seeing Pembleton come with his wife thither to church, I begin now to make no great matter of it, which before was so terrible to me.

It appears that Pembleton no longer posed a threat to Pepys once he had domestic concerns of his own. Pembleton's married status meant that he did not fulfil the stereotype of the Restoration rake or gallant, but instead that he shared the concern of all husbands to gain honour by keeping his own wife under control.

As a conclusion to this chapter it is interesting to reflect upon Pepys' thoughts at the end of a month of his wife's dancing lessons,

> My wife and I (by my late jealousy, for which I am truly to be blamed) have not that fondness between us which we used and ought to have, and I fear will be lost hereafter if I do not take some course to oblige her and yet preserve my authority.

From this diary entry it is clear that Pepys knew that his jealousy had no basis or reason as he could never prove that his Elizabeth had been unfaithful. At this point he also recognised that his jealousy had driven the relationship apart. But despite his concerns, Pepys had retained an awareness of the real issue at stake in his marriage; how he could "oblige" his wife without lessening his authority or control over her.[72] Defending male honour was no easy task.

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[72] R. Latham and W. Matthews (eds), The Diary of Samuel Pepys, (London,1970-1983), vol.IV, 1663, pp.140-205,229,277-278,291,300,318,337-8,347.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESPONDING TO MALE DISHONOUR

7.1 Introduction

One important distinction between male and female honour was that if it were lost there was the possibility for men to fully restore their honour where there was none for women. A woman's sexual reputation was arguably the sole component of her honour, so that as Ruth Kelso has recognised in her study of Renaissance texts for women, "let a woman have chastity, she has all. Let her lack chastity and she has nothing."[1] Loss of sexual honour for a woman was equivalent to death; Hero in Much Ado about Nothing (1598) is presumed dead when hearing her chastity questioned on her wedding day, she falls faint. Rich believed in 1613 that if a woman's honour was tainted, "she must rub off the skin to wipe out the spot."[2] Martin Ingram writes of how when a Yorkshire woman in this period heard another being defamed she commented "they might as well take her life as her good name from her".[3] Thus women who fought defamation cases in the church courts were seeking to defend rather than restore their sexual honour by arguing that it had never been lost. For unmarried women if virginity had been taken the situation was irredeemable. For men, however, whose honour rested upon a much wider basis of concerns than simply sexual reputation, and whose sexual reputation did not rest on the existence of a physical phenomenon such the hymen, honour was recoverable. Furthermore, husbands were expected to respond and take action if their wives shamed them by committing adultery; it was seen "primarily a matter of household discipline", whereas women

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[1] Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance, p.24.
[2] Rich, The Excellency of Good Women, p.15-16.
[3] Ingram, Church Courts, p.165.

were advised to be passive, and patient even if their partners were unfaithful.[4] As this chapter will show, the main condition for the recovery of male honour was that its restoration be witnessed by others. Just as gossip required an audience for it to become damaging slander, so men needed their neighbours to recognize their attempts to restore honour - informally in front of neighbours and servants, or formally in the courtroom. This chapter explores the relative effectiveness of the options open to men who wished to respond to dishonour.

7.2 Responding with Legal Action:

In 1673 Captain Charles Skelton returned from sea to hear reports that in his absence his wife, Dorothy, had played the whore with Charles Brooks, a servant to Baron Brouncker. Charles Brooks swore that Dorothy had given him the pox, and when Charles Skelton visited Brooks he found him to be a dying man. Charles Skelton's mother advised her son "of the great dishonour done to her family" by his wife. Skelton was to tell the court of Arches in the same year that "knowing he can neither with safety nor credit continue with her [he] doth endeavour to procure a divorce or separation".[5] Faced with dishonour Charles Skelton chose to take legal action, a decision which would have met with approval from many contemporary moralists. They argued that men should always go to the law to seek redress for dishonour, rather than take matters into their own hands. Thomas Heywood, writing under the name T.H. Gent wrote in 1657 that it was only "inhumane rashness" which led cuckolded men "to be their own justifiers", by which they "mingled the pollution of

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[4] Ingram, Church Courts, p.253; Fletcher, 'The Protestant Idea of Marriage', p.171; Davies, 'Continuity and Change', p.61; Jardine, Still Harping on Daughters, (London,1983), p.182-193

[5] CA,Case 8350,(1673),Ee4, f.299-303r.

their beds, with the blood of the delinquents."[6] Gailhard also appealed to men's reason when he argued that "all rational men" would agree that "it is not fit a man should be judge or executioner in his own case".[7]

But the choice between legal and non-legal methods of responding to dishonour was not as simple as these writers might seem to suggest. If a man's wife had played the whore, and he had consequently lost his sexual reputation, going to court to defend his name either against the slander of cuckold or to fight a separation suit could, as we have seen, have acted to further expose his shame. Hence men's relative absence from the church courts to fight over defamation suits compared with women, and hence my suggestion that faced with sexual slander some men may have followed a strategy of sending their wives to the courts to plead on their behalf.[8]

In the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century newspapers began to print some of the more sensational details of marriage separation cases, thereby drawing even more humiliating attention to the cuckold. For example, one husband complained in 1733 that anyone who appealed a matrimonial case to the court of Arches "must expect to have as much filth as a scavenger's cart will hold emptied upon him".[9] Even if a husband could convince the courts that his wife had committed adultery, the most he could hope for was separation from bed and board since the courts would not grant full divorce until 1857. This could prove to be a lengthy and costly legal process, as a husband was bound to maintain his wife whilst the case was being heard, and to pay for her legal costs as well as his own.[10] Husbands in

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[6] T. H. Gent, The Generall History of Women (London,1657), p.248.
[7] Gailhard, The Compleat Gentleman, p.127.
[8] See above, p.125-130.
[9] Stone, Road to Divorce, p.186.
[10] Stone, Road to Divorce, pp.187-190,197.

Restoration drama complained that the church courts operated a marriage separation system which always penalized the male party. Sir John Brute in The Provoked Wife (1697) wishes his wife could be proved unfaithful,

> Pox on her virtue! If I cou'd but catch her Adulterating, I might be Divorc'd from her by law,

to which Heatfree replies,

> And so pay her a yearly pension, to be a distinguished cuckold. [11]

Meanwhile Sir John's wife, who is also dissatisfied with the marriage, has already admitted to her niece that "these are good times; a woman may have a gallant and a separate maintenance too".[12] In actuality, if a wife was found guilty of committing adultery with a gallant, unless she was protected by a private deed of separation, she could be left penniless. Her husband could seize all her private property and savings, and she was unable to enter into any legal contract or credit agreement.[13] Why dramatists chose to portray the husband's position in this way is not clear, but it may be because they wanted to reflect popular male sentiment which persistently held that the legal system was prejudiced against cuckolds, despite evidence to the contrary.

But women could be awarded alimony if they successfully sued their husbands for separation on grounds of cruelty, and the words of their witnesses can reveal the anger and resentment that many men felt should they have to maintain their wives in this

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[11] Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife, (1697), III,i,103-106.
[12] Ibid., I,i,52-54; see also G.S. Alleman, Matrimonial Law and the Materials of Restoration Comedy (Philadelphia,1942), p.115-123.
[13] Stone, Road to Divorce, p.4-5.

way. Sir John Cremor was advised by a friend to "use" Ursula Cremor "like his wife, or else that he would allow her a Competent maintenance and that she might live apart from him". He angrily replied that he would continue to treat her as he pleased for "I know the Court of Arches hath no power but to commit me to prison and there will I remain as long as I live rather than she shall have a penny of my Estate".[14] As Elizabeth Harbin fled from her violent husband in Yeovil, Somerset in 1669 he cried after her "Go and the devil go with you, get what maintenance you can".[15] John Bradley showed a similar disdain for the power of the law when he accused his wife Cecily of trying to get a separate maintenance, claiming "I am not afraid of the Law".[16]

The small number of marriage separation cases which reached the church courts may reflect the unpopularity of this legal remedy for dishonour.[17] Parliamentary divorce was too expensive for most, and before 1700 only two private acts for divorce were introduced.[18] It is hard to know how far divorce or separation affected a man's honour since after the parties left the courts the details of their lives tend to disappear from the historical record.[19] We rely on clues from witness statements such as that made by William Rouse, an apothecary from St. Clements Danes, Middlesex, who believed that the Bound couple should be encouraged to stay together, for the "peace of their own

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[14] CA,Case 2391,(1667),Eee2, f.297r; I have found nothing to suggest that the court of Arches had the power to imprison a husband who did not pay alimony.
[15] CA,Case 4163,(1669),Eee4, f.79r.
[16] CA,Case 1128,(1675),Eee5, f.663v.
[17] In Durham there were only four cases for separation between 1604 and 1631, see above, p.113; for comparisons with other church courts see Ingram, Church Courts, p.181-2; for the relative lack of legal sanctions against adultery in England see Macfarlane, Marriage, p.240-244.
[18] Phillips, Untying the Knot, p.65.
[19] For an important exception see, Friedman, 'Portrait of a Marriage', p.542-555.

minds", and to prevent "the disreputation to their Family, which otherwise [would] necessarily follow".[20]

Evidence suggests that husbands who did decide to take legal action and sue their wives for adultery employed special pleading strategies to try and win sympathy and support for their cases. When a man used the slander of cuckold against another it was easy for him to mock the husband who by his poor sexual performance had been a cuckold of his own making. However, it was an entirely different matter when a man himself found he had been cuckolded. His wife's inconstancy questioned his sexual prowess, but we can hardly expect many men to admit that they were at fault. It was far easier to project the image of the 'self-made' cuckold onto others, than to swallow the bitter pill oneself. Thus for the cuckold the attribution of blame shifted from him to his wife. Adulterous women in the courtroom became scapegoats for male fears about their sexuality.[21] In the courtroom husbands and the witnesses who acted for them constructed narratives which applied the stereotype of 'whore' to the women who were suspected of committing adultery. A whore was a woman who no man could satisfy, hence when John Charnock was convinced that his wife was committing adultery, he expected it to assist his case when he related how he had spoken to the relatives of his wife's previous husband, and was told by them that she had "abused" him "in the like manner, and is not to be satisfied with one man".[22] Even the lovers of adulterous women are portrayed as fearing that they will be unable to match the desires of whores, "I think I shall not be sufficient to supply thy wants" Elizabeth Northmore's lover pitifully pleaded when she asked "will you have again"? Elizabeth is

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[20] CA,Case 1055,(1693),Eee7, f.662; I am hoping to investigate the experiences of couples after separation in a future research project.

[21] For the assumption that a man became a cuckold because he was unable to sexually satisfy his wife see above,p.77-87.

[22] CA,Case 1813,(1673),Ee4, f.122r.

shown as demanding never-ending sex since she was heard by Thomas Carter, who worked in the same household, to have boasted to her lover "if you could hold out I could afford you in my body every hour".[23]

Women were not only shown as insatiable once aroused, they were seen as seductive by nature. Lovers such as the apprentice Tarrant Reeves who found themselves discovered felt able to try to convince the courts that they had been seduced rather than been the seducers, "his Mistress instigated him thereto" Tarrant said.[24] Wives who were accused of adultery such as Mary Hockmore not only refused to be controlled by their husbands but are also shown to continue this reversal of gender roles by acting the dominant partner with their lovers. When Mary deserted her husband in Devon to come to London with midshipman Charles Manley in 1698, a fellow lodger witnessed a fight between the pair. When Charles pushed Mary from him she angrily exclaimed, "how now you pitiful Rascal I would not take this from my husband much less from you that am my servant".[25] The world is turned upside down in this adulterous relationship for it appears that the woman gains the dominant position and her lover is relegated to servitude status.

Similar portrayals of adulterous wives as powerful and insatiable whores who gain extraordinary enjoyment from sex have been found in the Elizabethan Court of Requests and in London church court records.[26] These husbands were supported by a wealth of misogynistic literature which also portrayed women as creatures of lust. "Most women have small waists the world throughout", The Revenger's Tragedy

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[23] CA,Case 6692,(1676),Eee6, f.124v.
[24] CA,Case 8136,(1669),Eee3, f.614r.
[25] CA,Case 4642,(1698),Eee8, f.621.
[26] Stretton, 'Women and Litigation', particularly p.231-232; and Gowing, 'Women', p.149-150.

(1607) taught, "But their desires are thousand miles about".[27] A satirical pamphlet published in the 1640's argued that women should have at least two husbands because monogomy left too many wives dissatisfied sexually.[28] Another example is that of D'Urfey's 1699 collection of ballads which contained a song entitled 'The Wife Hater'. This told the audience that no matter what type of woman a man married, he would sure to be cuckolded. For weaker vessels may,

> Spring leak or split against a rock,
> And when your fame's wrapped in a smock,
> 'Tis easily cast away.[29]

Whores cast male fame away because they had no shame or guilt about the consequences of their actions for their husband's reputations. Husbands and the witnesses who acted for them in adultery suits in the court of Arches appear to be anxious to show how adulterous wives lacked shame. When Thomas Carter related stories of Elizabeth Northmore's adultery he emphasized that she was "not abashed" at his entering the kitchen when her lover "had his hands under [her] clothes so high that he could see her knees". On another occasion Thomas was in the larder when Elizabeth and her lover were making love in the adjoining kitchen. After sex Thomas related how he saw Elizabeth take her lover's "yard and rolled it on her knee and wiped it with her shift", and then turning to Thomas "asked him whether he was going to supp and told him that if had not there was some victuals in the Cupboard". That Elizabeth was so openly committing adultery in the kitchen, and was with apparent

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[27] Anon, The Revenger's Tragedy, IV,iii,15-16, as cited in Gibbons, 'Gender in British Behmenist Thought', p.45-46.
[28] The Parliament of Women (1646), sigs.,A3v, A6v, as cited in Wiltenburg, Disorderly Women, p.151.
[29] D'Urfey, Wit and Mirth, p.128.

ease able to turn her attention from sex to the feeding of her household, was intended we may assume to show the shamelessness of whoredom.[30] Similarly, Francis Francklin, the cousin of Philip Litchfeild who brought an adultery suit against his wife in 1670, noted the complacency of Elizabeth Litchfeild when she was caught committing adultery. As the wife of an alehouse keeper Francis believed Elizabeth "with too much willingness" permitted her customers to be "familiar" with her. One day when Francis visited the house to pay a debt he found Elizabeth upstairs "with all her coats up", and a bricklayer upon her "having his breeches down". When Francis "blamed her for such her crime" he found that "she did not in the least deny" the adultery. There was no doubt in Francis' mind that Elizabeth had been caught in the act, but her denial would have represented a sense of ignominy and an awareness that what she had done was harmful to her own reputation and that of her husband. Instead all she was concerned about was her own safety, asking Francis "by no means to tell her husband". Elizabeth's lewd behaviour led her to be reprimanded and labelled as a whore by Francis's friend, Richard Charnock. Richard had never even met Elizabeth's husband but when he discovered Elizabeth committing adultery in November 1669 he cried "pox on you for a whore" and went to her and "gave her a slap with his hand".[31]

Richard's anger and response to Elizabeth's adultery is set in context when we understand that whores were regarded as dangerous women who were capable of offending many, "Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men" Othello resolved as he entered Desdemona's chamber.[32] Even though many married women who committed

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30 CA,Case 6692,(1676),Eee6, f.124r.
31 CA,Case 5720,(1669),Eee4, ff.205-209.
32 Shakespeare, Othello (c.1604), V,ii,6.

adultery may have had only one lover, in the popular imagination once a woman had initially transgressed she would repeat the sin over and over again,

> for if a woman
> Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
> She spreads and mounts then like arithmetic,
> One, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand,
> Proves in time sutler to an army royal. [33]

Thus in defamation cases the most frequently chosen adjectives used in conjunction with whore were "common whore" and "arrant whore".[34] A common whore was threatening to male reputation because she "belongs to everyone and to no-one."[35] When Thomas Somerly tried to persuade Ann Cripps to return to her husband after she had taken to living with one William Cheeseman in 1677, she refused saying she would never renounce her lover. But Thomas declared to Ann that as an adulterous woman he believed that she must have more lovers than just William, for "she that would be a whore to one would be so to more", an accusation which Ann strongly denied.[36] Ann, and other women who were accused of adultery had to fight against the weight of popular tradition which labelled them as whores. In the popular imagination whores shared common characteristics of being powerful, insatiable women with no regard for their own honour, or that of others. In the courtroom some cuckolded husbands were able to use these stereotypes to condemn their wives and detract attention away from their part in marriage breakdown.

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[33] Middleton and Rowley, The Changeling (1622), II,ii,60-64.
[34] See for example, DDR.V.8.f.40v; DDR.V.9.f.181r; DDR.V.10A.f.66a/r; DDR.V.11.f.66; DDR.V.12.f.2r; DDR.Box, no.414, (1636-1637), Isabell Chapman v. Roger Harper.
[35] Gowing, 'Women', p.33.
[36] CA,Case 2402,(1677),Eee6, f.290v.

As a response to male dishonour, the sanctions of secular jurisdiction may have had greater appeal for the lower sorts, who probably often could not afford the costs of suing for separation in the church courts. Adultery was a breach against the peace and as such offenders could be examined by JP's and punished by carting, whipping or imprisonment.[37] These punishments were designed to shame the adulterer and as such some husbands may have viewed them as suited to the offence. Familiarity with these punishments is shown by slanderers who called women "carted whore". For example, when Elizabeth Stenenson and Mary Chambers fell arguing in Windlestone, Durham in 1609, Mary called Elizabeth a "common carted whore and cried for a whip and a cart for her".[38] Husbands were willing to take this action against their wives; on St. Bartholomew's Day 1661 John Johnson had a JP issue a warrant against his wife Susan and two female servants who were then living at Mile end in London. The justice examined the women about the adulterous behaviour of Susan, and then sent Susan to prison "where she stayed for two nights and two days".[39] It is questionable how effective this action was, especially as it must have been seen to some extent as an admission by the husband that he could no longer control his own affairs. When John Johnson sought the aid of the secular authorities, it represented a transferral of control and a resignation of authority which he never regained. After being released from prison Susan refused to return to her husband, she argued for fear of him again sending her to prison. Angry and suspicious husbands could always threaten to imprison their wives; in 1668 John Ward beat his wife in her kinsman's house in Holborn "calling her whore and saying he would fetch a constable", and witnesses reported in 1669 that James Whiston of St. Andrews, Undershaft London would often call his wife whore "and threatened to put her in prison" where she would "starve and

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[37] Godolphin, Repertorium, p.474; Thomas, 'The Act of 1650', p.265-266.
[38] DDR.V.9. f.182r; for other examples see DDR.V.11.f.167-168r; DDR.V.12. f.71; DDR.V.12. f.141r; Gowing, 'Women', p.59.
[39] CA,Case 5127,(1661),Eel, ff.14,36v-37v.

rot".[40] But for a man to actually carry out these threats was probably seen as a sign of weakness indicative of marriage breakdown, and as such was not a response which would have regained honour. That witnesses who acted for the wives of John Ward and James Whiston in their cases for separation on grounds of cruelty chose to tell the courts of the husband's threats of imprisonment, may show that this behaviour would not have been regarded as manly or honourable.

Unlike women, who were ready to slander their husbands' whores, men very infrequently directed verbal abuse or legal action against their wives' lovers.[41] As will be argued throughout this chapter, it was men's wives rather than their male rivals who were most often the targets of their anger. Thus the case in which Thomas Rawdon brought Christopher Dickon to the Durham consistory court in January 1637 for committing adultery with Isabell his wife merits our detailed attention because of its rarity. Before coming to court Rawdon had already confronted Dickon outside his home at Burdon "telling him that a whore and a harlot were best together and so threatened to put his wife out of doors with him the said Dickon". When Dickon had the audacity to declare that Rawdon "should be welcome to lie of any bed in his house", Rawdon replied that "if he lay of any of his beds he would not go to make a whore of his wife." Rawdon saw male infidelity as tolerable as long as it did not threaten another man's property. Furthermore, in Rawdon's eyes it was men who made women whores. This latter argument was developed in the remarks made by the two witnesses who acted for Rawdon, who presented Dickon as the person who deceived and betrayed Rawdon. We are told how Dickon on one occasion sent Rawdon to fetch a horse which was half a mile from Rawdons' home. Dickon "made show as though he would have gone home to his own house", but once Rawdon was

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[40] CA,Case 9607,(1668),Eee3, f.674v; CA,Case 9870,(1669),Eee3, f.548r.
[41] For women who slander their husbands' whores see above, p.109.

out of sight he turned back to visit Rawdon's wife. Dickon also took the opportunity to cuckold Rawdon in his absence when Rawdon was away in Durham city. One witness, who stood beneath the chamber window after Dickon had gone into Rawdon's house, heard Dickon boast to Isabell "that he then occupied her better than her husband had done for a year before, as he well durst say". We cannot know for certain why Rawdon made the unusual decision to take his wife's lover to court. Dickon's arrogance may have made Rawdon realize that "angry words" would have no effect. But going to court made him a public cuckold, a humiliation which perhaps could only be borne if Dickon was presented as a man who had no respect for other men's property, and thus was a threat, not only to the Rawdon household, but to the wider social order.[42] As has been shown above, when cuckolds went to the courts, whether it was to fight for separation against their wives, or to prosecute their wives' lovers, their witnesses needed to present their stories in such a way as to point the finger of blame away from the husband. Adulterous wives needed to be proved uncontrollable whores, their lovers agents of familial and social disorder.[43] Given the risk that witnesses stories would not prove convincing, it is little wonder that many husbands sought other means to restore their honour, and only saw legal redress as a last resort.

7.3 Non-Violent Alternatives to Legal Action

Within early modern society there were many informal mechanisms for reconciliation between parties who had by whatever means damaged reputation. Parish ministers,

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[42] DDR.Box, no.414, (1636-7), Thomas Rawdon v. Christopher Dickon.
[43] See above, p.194-198.

JP's, local gentry, or other friends of the parties often acted as arbitrators in disputes.[44] Their aim was to reconcile the parties and restore honour without necessitating legal action. For example, in 1605 Durham consistory court heard how Gregory Hutchinson had a special meeting with Isabelle Moore in St. Margaret's church in Durham city. In front of the curate "and some other of their Neighbours" Gregory begged Isabelle's forgiveness for spreading gossip that she was an adulteress.[45]

In this context pledging could play a useful social role as parties could mark agreement with a drink. Hence in Arden of Faversham (c.1591) when Alice pretends to have a disagreement with her secret lover Mosby, her husband Arden attempts to reconcile them with a drink. Arden is made to look a fool as he orders his servant to "fetch me a cup of wine; I'll make them friends", and then Alice "pledges" Mosby.[46] Historians of church court records have found evidence of pledging serving this function across the country.[47] The practice can be seen from the defamation case of Peter Forster against Robert Huntley. In June 1606 they had an argument over a game of bowls about some seven pence "in question betwixt them". This resulted in Robert Huntley calling Peter Forster a "scurvy pocky knave". A few months later the two were together at William Mallabar's house in Newcastle for supper. A "motion", or suggestion directed towards Robert Huntley and Peter Forster was made by one of those present "that the matter in controversy might be ended betwixt them and a kindness made", or expressed in another way by a different witness, "that the said parties should be friends". To this,

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[44] Ingram, Church Courts, pp.34,111,207,318; Sharpe, "Such Disagreement",p. 173-177; A. Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces: The Government of Stuart England (London,1986), pp.66-68,79-81.

[45] DDR.V.8.ff.77v,78r,84a.

[46] Anon, Arden of Faversham, (c.1591), xiv,199-219.

[47] Sharpe, "Such Disagreement", pp.173-77,182-5; M. Ingram, 'Law and Disorder in Early Seventeenth Century Wiltshire', in J.S. Cockburn, (ed.), Crime in England 1500-1800 (London,1977), p.125-7; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, p.66-67; Gowing, 'Women', pp.64,93.

recalled John Chaytor, "the said Robert did drink to the said Peter and he .... pledged him". Peter Forster hesitated before returning the pledge, but eventually at the persuasion of his friends he agreed that "he would pledge the said Huntley in kindness, but he would not for any entreaty put up those words that the said Huntley had spoken against him, for it stood upon his credit to clear himself thereof." For Peter Forster that Robert Huntley was willing to pledge him in front of friends was not enough. He felt the need for his "credit" to be recognised amongst the wider community, and he believed that the only way to do this was by going to court.[48] It appears that there were degrees of shame to which a man could be subjected, and that there was a point at which forms of informal settlement such as pledging were no longer regarded as adequate responses.

Our problem as historians is that since there were usually no records made of arbitration or out of court settlements, except when they failed and the dispute came to the courts, we shall probably never know how often men did find informal arbitration a satisfactory remedy to damaged honour. It is similarly difficult to estimate how many husbands acted as the previously mentioned Thomas Rawdon had threatened and put their wives "out of doors"; in other words, did not attempt to continue their marriages once they had been cuckolded.[49] It is probable that the occasion of adultery could provoke marriage breakdown in this way. It may have led some couples to informally separate, or for one partner to desert the other without the sanction of the church courts. Risk of detection and prosecution for this offence was low; Ingram has found that less than two cases for unlawful separation per year were recorded in the three

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[48] DDR.V.8.ff.178,197,200v,201r,204v,205r; for another example of pledging from the Durham consistory court see, DDR.Box, no.414, (1633-4), Cecilie Smith v. Elinor Rawlyn.

[49] See above, p.200.

main Wiltshire jurisdictions between 1615-1629.[50] Details of this response to male dishonour were only recorded when one of the partners later decided to formally separate and bring a marriage separation case to the church courts. When in 1575 Henry Bland, a sailor from King's Lynn, returned from sea to find his wife pregnant, she was "put away". It was five years later that Henry brought a separation suit to the courts.[51] Men such as James Leech of Cripplegate, London quite literally attempted to distance their reputations from their adulterous wives'. James' wife complained in 1661 that more than seven years previously her husband had refused to let her back into the house when upon "groundless" suspicion he became convinced that she had been unfaithful.[52] Thomas Middleton's attempts to rid himself of his wife were less successful. He told the court of Arches in 1662 that his wife's persistent adulterous and disobedient behaviour forced him to "put her out of his house" because he could no longer "endure the same". But his wife continued to walk by his door with "loose and suspicious persons", and so that "she should not walk abroad to disgrace him", Thomas had to offer her a private room in his house with "all necessaries fit for her".[53]

Men who were forced to keep adulterous wives within their households could still disassociate themselves from their wives by refusing any further sexual contact. Once a partner had broken the marriage contract by committing adultery, moralists agreed that the injured spouse no longer owed any conjugal debt to his partner.[54] This belief finds expression in popular literature, for example in Braithwait's Ar't asleep Husband, a collection of "witty jests", and "merry Tales". In one tale when a husband finds his

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[50] Ingram, Church Courts, p.185-186.
[51] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.127.
[52] CA,Case 5551,(1661),Eel, ff.59,61v-67r.
[53] CA,Case 6234,(1662),Eel, f.118v-122r.
[54] Tentler, Sin and Confession, p.219.

wife committing adultery his response is to "divorce" her from his bed.[55] There is some evidence that this action was taken in reality. When Anne Fanne was called whore by Margaret Smith in London, the consistory court heard in 1610 that Anne's husband had been so offended that he refused to let her lie with him.[56]

It has been noted that one consequence of a wife's adultery could be that a husband was driven into debt.[57] One practical response to this was for the husband to announce that he would no longer be responsible for any debts that his wife might incur. Edmund Clarke divorced his credit from his wife's when he "caused it to be cried in Winchester and two other places that she was not to be trusted."[58] Similarly, in 1669 John Milner of St. Clement Danes, Middlesex, "fearing that she might run him into debt", had papers or bills set upon posts in the city of London forbidding any person to trust his wife.[59] All these husbands had been deserted by their wives and their actions sometimes could go a step further when they claimed that their wives had taken household goods and other property with them as they departed. The anger of husbands in these cases must have been at least partly directed at their wives' lovers who, having stolen a marriage partner, could also appear to be benefiting financially from the liaison. Ann Cripps had only been married to John of Shadwell, Middlesex for seven months when she left him to live with William Cheeseman. John complained to his friend that his wife had "robbed him of his goods", and, together with a constable, they went to where Ann and William lodged. They told Ann that William

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[55] Braithwait, Ar't asleep Husband, p.50.
[56] Gowing, 'Women', p.81.
[57] See above, p.156-157.
[58] CA,Case 1888,(1676),Ee4, f.501r.
[59] CA,Case 6292,(1669),Ee3, f.482v-485v; for other examples see, CA,Case 9388, (1666),Eee2, f.113v; CA,Case 4177,(1669),Ee3, f.574r; CA,Case 10406,(1671), Eee4, f.513r; for evidence of this practice in early modern America see, Phillips, Putting Asunder, p.287-288.

"might be hanged for running away with another man's wife who had broke open her husband's Trunks". Ann boldly defended her lover and replied that "he did not steal her, but she stole him, and that she would be hanged rather than he should be hanged".[60] According to witnesses who spoke for Cecily Bradley in 1663, John Bradley was a violent man who kept suspicious company with a widow Anne Cooke. Despite his own adulterous behaviour, when John beat his wife he would accuse her of being unfaithful. When he was imprisoned in the Tower for suspected treason, Cecily removed some of the goods from their house, arguing that it was to keep them safe. When John was suddenly released, however, he called his wife a "Barbados whore" and accused her and her friends of stealing his goods. Enraged, he went to a JP who told him "that he could not commit her upon the account of felony she being his wife". So John tried another tactic, and persuaded his brother in law, Thomas Fenton to claim that some of the stolen goods were his. Cecily and her friends were brought to the Old Bailey and charged with felony, a charge which could have cost them their lives, but were acquitted when Thomas' story was proved false. John Bradley was unable to produce a single witness to prove that his wife had been unfaithful in the separation case for cruelty which followed. His behaviour appears to have been provoked by hatred and anger, and fuelled by a desire for revenge.[61]

It is likely that some other husbands attempted to reach a financial settlement with their wives' lovers. In Erpingham, Norfolk in 1614 John Friend's neighbours believed that he must have been "corrupted with money" to accept his wife's adultery with William Fuller.[62] When a tailor from Lichfield in 1701 found a man in bed with his wife he bargained with his wife's lover for compensation "for injury he received",

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[60] CA,Case 2402,(1677),Eee6, f.288.
[61] CA,Case 1127,(1663),Ee1, ff.483-485, 612-617r; Eee1, ff.56v-64v,76v-87v.
[62] Amussen, An Ordered Society, p.97.

starting with a demand for £10, and finally settling for £5.[63] Husbands could also seek monetary compensation in a more formal manner by suing the lover for damages in actions of criminal conversation within the common law courts. This new form of legal action was introduced in the late seventeenth century and may have developed from the more informal compensation agreements. Crim.con. actions were only slowly adopted as a course of action for cuckolded husbands, and I have only found one mention of a case within the statements of parties in the court of Arches.[64] Stone has found only 14 cases between 1692 and 1730. The reasons why the action for criminal conversation was introduced remain obscure, but Stone's generalized explanation that there was a "a shift from an honour and shame society to a commercial society" seems unconvincing.[65] The high cost of bringing these cases certainly restricted this way of responding to dishonour to the wealthy. As with other legal action, bringing a crim.con. case could also expose the cuckolded husband to embarrassing publicity, and this may partly explain why such actions remained relatively rare. Yet the financial potential of crim. con. actions is revealed in Alexander Denton's separation case against his wife in 1688, in which witnesses stated that he had successfully won £5,000 in damages from her lover Thomas Smith. How far even large sums of money helped to alleviate feelings of shame and loss, however, remains unclear.[66]

Whilst there is evidence of one-off payments between husbands and their wives' lovers this response to dishonour was probably not readily or frequently accepted. In a society which laid so much emphasis on men maintaining exclusive sexual ownership of their wives, it seems unlikely that as Quaife suggests "many private whores were

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[63] Stone, Road to Divorce, p.244.
[64] CA,Case 2730,(1688),Ee7, f.44r; Eee7, f.88r.
[65] Stone, Road to Divorce, p.231-251; Stone, 'Honor, Morals, Religion, and the Law', p.280-282.
[66] CA,Case 2730,(1688),Ee7, f.44r; Eee7, f.88r.

encouraged by their husbands."[67] Ballads such as 'The Rich and Flourishing Cuckold well Satisfied' (1675), in which a cuckold so profits from his wife's adultery that he always has rich dinners, a cellar full of wine, fine clothes, and so much gold that it runs out of his horns, were clearly intended to be comical.[68] The idea that a wife should have a trade that maintained her husband, as 'The Merry Cuckold' suggests, represented an inversion of traditional roles that was fit only for laughter.[69] But whilst these ballads may have exaggerated the degree to which cuckolded husbands were able to make a living from their partner's adultery, the fact that many feature husbands accepting money from their wives' lovers, may reflect that one-off payments were a feature of lower class society.[70] Whilst the exchange of money may have actually helped to settle many village disputes, this did not, of course, prevent ballad writers such as Martin Parker toeing the moral line on the issue. His story of 'The Cooper of Norfolk' told how the cooper gained access to the brewer's silver and gold after he discovered their adultery. The ballad ends with a verse warning other couples against this response to dishonour,

> Let no marry'd couple, that hear this tale told,
> Be of the opinion this couple did hold,
> (To sell reputation for silver or gold)
> For credit and honesty should not be sold.[71]

7.4 Responding to Dishonour with Violence: Men v. Men

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[67] Quaife, Wanton Wenches, p.151.
[68] ' The Rich and Flourishing Cuckold well Satisfied", Roxburghe, (1675), vol.VIII, part III, clxiv-clxv.
[69] 'The Merry Cuckold', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.5-8.
[70] For other examples of ballads in which husbands accept money after their wife's adultery see, 'The Lancashire Cuckold', Euing, p.320; 'The Country Cuckold', Pepys, vol. IV, p.139; 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483; 'The Dyer's Destiny', Roxburghe, (1685-1688), vol.IV, p.405-407.
[71] 'The Cooper of Norfolk', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.99-104.

Within a culture which associated manhood with physical strength, being able to defend one's honour with one's fists was important.[72] The alehouse and its immediate environs was a favourite location for righting wrongs with violence. As an important centre for male conviviality the alehouse offered a public forum for the testing of honour, and the drink consumed may have made arguments more heated, with blows more likely to result. T. Brennan has found that sexual insults directed at men were a common source of trouble in Parisian taverns, and as P. Clark has argued that the alehouse "provided an important place for the settling of local conflicts", this pattern of insult followed by a brawl was probably also found in the English alehouse.[73] Sharpe has found from his survey of homicide records from the Essex assizes that the combination of a meeting in an alehouse, and "falling out over a bill or a game of cards, or the imagining of a new insult or the remembering of an old one" could be fatal.[74] When Thomas Pouncey insulted Richard Paty in an alehouse in Dorchester in 1637 they went outside and fought with their fists, returning to the alehouse "all bloody with fighting".[75] J.M. Beattie has found similar evidence of men fighting each other after insults in his survey of the Surrey assizes of the late seventeenth century. Boxing matches were regarded as the "popular duel" and were "controlled and apparently well-ordered contests that would result in a settlement that both would accept with honor."[76]

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[72] See above, pp.62, 92;Roper, Oedipus and the Devil, p.113-116; Amussen, "The part of a Christian man", p.220-222.

[73] T. Brennan, Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris (Princeton,1988), pp.8,25-6,52-53,55,60-63; Clark, The English Alehouse, p.153; for the typical pattern of alehouse brawls see, S.D. Amussen, "'Being Stirred to Much Unquietness'",p.74-75; Amussen, 'The Gendering', p.63-64.

[74] Sharpe, Crime in seventeenth-century England, p.131.

[75] D.Underdown, Fire Under Heaven: The Life of an English Town in the Seventeenth Century (London,1992), p.163-164.

[76] J.M. Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800 (Princeton,1986), p.91-94.

The comparatively ordered nature of these fights contrasts with the ballad depictions of frenzied violent attacks of husbands who caught their wives and their lovers in flagrante delicto. Some ballads portray husbands threatening to castrate their wives' lovers. 'The Lancashire Cuckold' says he will whip out the "nutmegs" of the man he finds in his bed unless he is offered sufficient monetary compensation, 'The Country Cuckold' pulls out his knife to deprive his adulterous neighbour of his talent, forcing his victim to plead "spare the Tools, and take this Money", and one contented cuckold relates to his friends that until his wife's lover provided him with "rich sparkling wine" he "liqour'd his hide".[77] We cannot quantify the extent of this kind of violence in reality, but it certainly occurred. A wife from East Coker, Somerset confessed that when her husband found her in bed with her lover he "drew his knife and ran after him to have killed him".[78] The courts were likely to view this type of violence by husbands sympathetically. When a corkcutter in London in the mid eighteenth century found his wife and her lover in bed, and killed the man in a rage, the judge convicted him of manslaughter, saying he was to be burnt "gently" in the hand "because there could be no greater provocation."[79] However, as will be shown below, violence of this sort was more likely to be directed at a wife than at her lover.[80]

The ritual of the duel was distinctive among the gentry as a means of defending and restoring honour. In 1576 the first fencing school was established by Blackfriars and soon a large number of books were published on the art of duelling. Stone notes that the number of duels recorded in newsletters and correspondence rose from five in the

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[77] 'The Lancashire Cuckold', Euing, p.320; 'The Country Cuckold', Pepys, vol.IV, p.139; 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483.
[78] Quaife, Wanton Wenches, p.138.
[79] As quoted in Beattie, Crime, p.95.
[80] See below, p.213-224.

1580's to thirty-three in the decade from 1610 to 1619.[81] Duels were featured or mentioned in many of the plays performed throughout the period by playwrights from Shakespeare to Vanbrugh.[82] This was a form of violence which was highly ritualised and codified. Insults were formalized into the "giving of the lie" and were followed by letters of challenge, which often reveal the motivation behind the duels which then ensued. Henry Knight of Tythegston, Wales challenged a rival as a fool and a liar in the seventeenth century "which I am ready to make good as a gentleman ought".[83] Duels were fought in response to a number of insults, of which a small number included the sexual. Samuel Gibson acted as a witness when Thomas Duffet sued for separation on grounds of adultery in 1676, and revealed that Thomas had fought a duel concerning his wife Lucy with her alleged lover Nicholas Throgmorton.[84] A duel which achieved wider notoriety was that fought between George Villiers, the second duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1670. Buckingham had been accused of adultery with the Duchess of Shrewsbury, and in the duel which followed he inflicted serious wounds on the Earl, from which he later died.[85]

Criticisms of this type of response to dishonour varied in their sophistication of argument. Ballads which told of combats which had occurred emphasized the tragedy of the loss of young noble lives. When two of the king's favourites, Sir James Steward

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[81] L. Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy (Oxford,1965), p.244-245; for a history of duelling in this period see, V.G. Kiernan, The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy (Oxford,1988), pp.79-88,99-103.

[82] See for example, Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet,(c.1595),III,i; Much Ado about Nothing,(1598),V,i; Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness,(1603),iii; Wycherley, The Country Wife,(1675),II,i; Southerne, The Wives' Excuse,(1692),I,iii,21-41; Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife,(1697),V,ii; for further examples see Kiernan, The Duel, p.84-88.

[83] As quoted in P. Jenkins, The Making of a Ruling Class : The Glamorgan Gentry 1640-1790 (Cambridge,1983), p.200; see also Stone, Crisis, p.244.

[84] CA,Case 2891,(1676),Eee6, f.93v-94r.

[85] J.A. Sharpe, Crime in early modern England 1550-1750 (London,1984), p.97.

and Sir George Wharton killed each other in a duel after an argument over a game of cards, a ballad writer concluded his story of events by

> wishing that quarrels all may cease
> And that we still may live in love, in prosperous state, in joy and peace.[86]

Puritan writers saw the duel and the honour code it embraced as in direct contrast to Christian values.[87] As a sign of changing understandings of the meanings of honour The Gentleman's Magazine in the eighteenth century argued that honour should rest on a gentleman's display of virtue, and not on a single act.[88] Many argued that a man should seek satisfaction for injury in the courts; when Sir Francis Bacon was Attorney General he described duelling as an affront to the law which was based on a false code of honour, " a kind of satanical illusion and apparition of honour".[89] But the lack of adequate legal remedies, illustrated by the limited success of the Earl Marshal's court in attracting business in the early seventeenth century, explains precisely why men continued to respond to dishonour using the sword well into the eighteenth century.[90] As Adam Smith wrote in 1753, "affronts in company are most atrocious crimes; the trifling sum of five or ten pounds is by no means an adequate compensation for them."[91]

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[86] 'The Combat of Stewart and Wharton', Roxburghe, vol.VII, p.595-598; for another example of a ballad about duelling see, 'Combat between Armstrong and Musgrave', Roxburghe, (c.1674-80),vol.VII, p.606-608.
[87] Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour, p.127-135.
[88] D.T. Andrew, 'The code of honour and its critics: the opposition to duelling in England, 1700-1850', Social History, vol.5, no.3, (1980), p.418-419.
[89] J. Spedding (ed.), The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon (London,1868-90), vol.4, pp.399,409, as cited in Walker, 'Crime', p.132.
[90] Stone, Crisis, p.248-249.
[91] A. Smith, Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms (1753; New York,1964),145, as cited in Andrew, 'The code', p.419.

7.5 Responding to Dishonour with Violence : Men v. Women

This section explores what psychologists have labelled as reactive jealousy; behaviour of husbands who had become convinced that their wives had been unfaithful and they had been cuckolded.[92] Usually physically weaker than any real or imagined male rival, women were the easy victims of this type of male anger. Male reactions varied from individual to individual and could develop from verbal to physical abuse. As will be argued, however, there was a point at which violence by husbands directed against women became dishonourable.

By degrading their partners by calling them whore some husbands may have hoped to elevate their own position; it may have been, as C. Kahn has argued, a means for a husband to "regain a measure of dignity".[93] For others it may have been a way of "jumping the gun", of anticipating the worst and labelling your wife as a whore before others did, and so avoiding the accusation of ignorance or being a wittol cuckold.[94] The large number of witnesses who related to the church courts how men called their wives whores shows how readily this insult came to the lips of angry husbands. Ann Fox of Barking, Essex lived with Rachael and John Norcott in the mid 1650's and often heard John call his wife "Damn'd Whore and damn'd Jade"; Ann Boteler complained in 1672 that her husband often called her "vile and base woman and whore"; and Hester Denton of Hillesden, Buckinghamshire, told the court of Arches that she was forced to leave her husband for he would call her "Bitch and whore, and the like and said [she]...might go where she pleased like a whore or a Jade as she

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[92] Van Sommers, Jealousy, pp.80,86.
[93] C. Kahn, 'Whores and Wives in Jacobean Drama', in D. Kehler and S. Baker (eds), In Another Country: Feminist Perspectives on Renaissance Drama, (London,1991), p.252.
[94] For the meaning of wittol see below, p.230-231.

was".[95] Lady Cockwood in Etherege's She Would if She Could (1667/8) lamented that men responded to their own failures in this way,

> This is the usual revenge of such base men as thou art.
> When they cannot compass their ends, with their ven-
> omous tongues to blast the honour of a lady.[96]

Other husbands threatened to mark their wives as whores. Angry wives who warned that they would slit the noses of their husband's whores have already been discussed, and it seems that this was also a punishment that husbands threatened for unfaithful wives.[97] When John Norcott called his wife whore he also said "he would give her a whore's mark", and after Grace Hubbard left her husband he declared that if he met her again "he would slit her nose".[98] In 1669 James Whiston made his intentions quite clear when he said he would give his wife a whore's mark for he "would put his fingers into his nose and wrest it to show how he would use her".[99] Some men were even prepared to carry out these threats. In what was probably a separation case on grounds of cruelty heard in Durham consistory court in 1631, Joseph Pattison of the city of Durham said that he had seen Robert Peacock "pull his said wife...by her nose till blood gushed out by reason of her absence from her house when he came home".[100] Why a slit nose had become the symbol of a whore is not entirely clear. When Humphrey Mildmay said he would slit his wife's nose he said that it would mark her

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[95] CA,Case 6659,(1666),Eee2, f.96v; CA,Case 1041,(1672),Ee3, f.739v; CA,Case 2730, (1688),Ee7, f.13v-14r; for other examples see CA,Case 9607,(1668),Eee3, ff.674v,688; CA,Case 9870,(1669),Eee3, f.547v-555v.
[96] Etherege, She Would if She Could (1667/8), V,i,137-139.
[97] See above, p.109.
[98] CA,Case 6659,(1666),Eee2, f.96v; CA,Case 4834,(1669),Eee3, 46v.
[99] CA,Case 9870,(1669),Eee3, ff.548r,550r,555r.
[100] DDR.V.12.f.288r.

"for any ugly beast".[101] So just as with husbands who called their wives whore, slitting a nose could have been regarded as a signal that a husband was no fool for he recognised his wife for what she was and was prepared to take action. Gowing argues that noses were phallus symbols so this revenge was a type of castration.[102] This is possible, but what may be more likely is that along with the vagina and mouth, the nose was seen as another outlet of the female body which could become polluted with sex and sin, and just as scolds had their tongues cut and bled, so whores could have their noses cut to cleanse and purify the whole body.[103]

Wives certainly expected that if they were discovered to be unfaithful they would be subject to physical violence by their husbands. When Anne is discovered committing adultery in Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603) she pleads with her husband,

> mark not my face
> Nor hack me with your sword, but let me go
> Perfect and undeformed to my tomb. [104]

When Abigail Lea became pregnant whilst her husband was away in Virginia she took steps to give birth to the child in secret, for she told her lodger "that she feared that if it should come to the ears of her husband that she had a child in his absence he would kill her".[105] When the earl of Macclesfield endeavoured to see his wife who he believed was sheltering at her sister's house in November 1696, he had to give

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101 CA,Case 6244,(1672),Ee4, f.54v.
102 Gowing, 'Language, Power and the Law', pp.32,46,n.29.
103 Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories', p.123-142; for scolds and tongues see below, p.225-227.
104 Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness, (1603),xiii,99-101.
105 CA,Case 5585,(1667),Eee2, f.780-782.

assurances that even if he found that she was pregnant with another man's child "no violence, or ill usage should be done to the said Countess".[106]

Violence was a common response by men who believed that their honour had been damaged by their wives' sexual behaviour. Thomas Thompkyns gave his wife "four or five blows on her shoulders" when he found her committing adultery in a room behind his shop in 1574, and when Christopher Evans returned home to hear rumours that Humfrey Pritchard had been in his wife's bed, witnesses told the London consistory court in 1613 that he pulled her out of bed and kicked her with his feet.[107] Records from the Restoration period tell similar stories. Thomas Middleton admitted in 1662 that he struck his wife, but this was only after she continued to keep lewd company despite his desire and requests for her to do otherwise.[108] In July 1668 Barbara Ward went to visit her kinsman Captain Hinson at his house at St. Mary le Savoy, Middlesex. About two weeks later her husband burst angrily into the house, beat her and pulled her handkerchief so tightly round her neck that she feared she would choke to death. As he beat her he called her bitch and whore, and when Captain Hinson's wife later searched for a meaning for this violence she recalled how at Easter time he had told her that "his wife was a whore, and that he was very well satisfied that she was a whore, and that he would have nothing to do with her".[109] John Charnock argued in 1673 that his wife's "abuses of him have been such that would have provoked any person" to anger. She openly committed adultery and told her husband that his lack of sexual prowess meant that he deserved such treatment. She continually scolded and brawled with him, dressed in clothes that would "disgrace" him, and provided inadequate food for him and his guests. In this context John's admission that

106 CA,Case 5938,(1697),Eee8, ff.421-422,424r.
107 As cited in Gowing, 'Women',pp.157,198-9.
108 CA,Case 6234,(1662),Ee1, f.119v-120r.
109 CA,Case 9607,(1668),Eee3, ff.673v-674v, 687v-688v.

he once hit her "over the mouth with the back of his hand without doing her any hurt, nor was there any blood caused thereby" appears to be a mild response.[110] The merchant Richard Goodall presented the story of his violence to his adulterous wife in a similar way. After forbidding her from keeping "suspicious" company he twice found her in bed with different men. When she reviled him when he questioned her behaviour on the first discovery he gave her "a little light tap upon her head with his hand which as he believes would not have hurt a child of two years old". On the second occasion he struck her "softly upon the head with his slipper".[111] A final example is that of Edmund Clarke who told the court of Arches in 1676 of the debauched lifestyle of his wife Martha who had driven him into debt by her "entertainment" of troops in his house, and who had become "so shameless" that "she did go hand in hand with some of them into the cathedral church of Winchester". When finding his plate missing he questioned her and she replied in a "scornful manner", pushing him away. Given all this provocation Edmund declared that in response he only "gently pushed his hand, and no more".[112]

Until 1891 husbands had a legal right to punish or correct their wives using physical means. Even if husbands killed their adulterous wives they could expect the courts to be lenient, for whilst they would be technically guilty of manslaughter, in practice most courts would have regarded adultery as severe provocation.[113] So why did husbands such as John Charnock, Richard Goodall, and Edmund Clarke feel they had to defend their actions when their wives had betrayed them, and why did they describe their

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110 CA,Case 1813,(1673),Ee4, f.118v-129r; for further discussion of this case see above, p. 86.
111 CA,Case 3789,(1662),Ee1, f.195-196.
112 CA,Case 1888,(1676),Ee4, f.484-501r.
113 Phillips, Putting Asunder, pp.324-325,331; Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery', p.268-269; F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, The History of English Law (Cambridge,1952), p.484-5.

correction of their wives to the court as mild, even gentle ? The answer may rest upon the fact that both seventeenth century popular culture and Puritan moral thinking largely condemned wife beating.[114] So husbands who appeared in the church courts had to defend their violence by presenting it as a response to adultery, an example of extreme wifely disobedience which required a severe response. If they also argued that they exercised restraint when disciplining their wives, by hitting 'gently', not drawing any blood and so on, husbands could also endeavour to show that they had used reason in their use of strength, and avoid any accusations of lack of control or madness.

However, the words of their wives' witnesses often portray an uneasiness and uncertainty that adultery had taken place, and a fear that the beatings had therefore been unjustified. Thomas Crosfeild spoke for Martha Clarke and denied that she had played the whore with the troops in Winchester, instead arguing that she had always carried herself with "conjugal respect and obedience to her said husband". He remembered how after about six months of marriage Edmund Clarke had spoken of his wife and "commended her...and said he believed she was very virtuous". Instead of deserved beatings in response to adultery, Thomas partly attributed Edmund's violence to drink.[115] Henry Loades, who acted as a witness for Ellen, wife of John Charnock in 1673, said that "he never heard unless it was from the said John or his brother that the said Ellen was of a loose life".[116] Witnesses for Rachael Norcott, whose husband often called her whore when he was violent, could find no reason why he should have thought his wife a whore. One male witness wondered how Rachael could bear her

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114 See above, p.92-99.
115 See above, p.217; CA,Case 1888,(1676),Eee6, f.278v.
116 See above p.216-217; CA,Case 1813,(1673),Eee5, f.23v.

husband's cruelty with such patience, she "never giving him any occasion for such madness or distraction she being most obedient".[117]

The madness which this witness described was that associated with jealousy.[118] One of the reasons why Heale thought the courts rather than husbands should deal with a wife's adultery was because the law could recognise "the jealousy of husbands touching their wives' incontinence", and distinguish "actual proof" from "the brain-sick fancies of their fond husbands."[119] Those who witnessed husbands beating their wives were also anxious to make this distinction, and to establish that beatings had a cause, and were not just triggered by jealous imagination. Frequently witnesses depose that they asked the husband the reason for their violence. Sarah Dobson asked Rachael's husband, John Norcott "why he abused his wife"; Edward Trussell asked John Hooper in June 1673 "whether he was not ashamed to use his said wife as it appeared he had"; and when one witness questioned John Bradley about why he beat his wife, he later recalled that John did not offer any reason but "laughed and did not deny the said cruelty."[120] Witnesses questioned the motives behind Sir Oliver Boteler's cruelty to his wife, one asking him "why he used his lady so ill, when...she loved him so dearly", another asking why he was violent when she was known to be virtuous. It is noticeable that social status did not deter witnesses to domestic violence asking questions; both of the latter witnesses were servants in the Boteler household.[121] Finally, it is important to remember that those wives who brought cruelty suits against

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117 See above, p.213; CA,Case 6659,(1666),Eee2, f.124r.
118 For the link between jealousy and madness see above p.182-183.
119 Heale, An Apology, p.33.
120 CA,Case 6659,(1666),Eee2, f.95r; CA,Case 4747,(1673),Eee5, f.251v; CA,Case 1128,(1675),Eee5, f.681r; for another example see CA,Case 1813,(1673),Eee5, f.20v.
121 CA,Case 1041,(1672),Eee4, ff.856r,868v.

their husbands were all seeking to establish recognition that, as Desdemona says as she is beaten, "I have not deserv'd this."[122]

When witnesses could see no reason for wife beating and were convinced that a wife was virtuous they were ready to label the husbands' actions as dishonourable. Several witnesses who saw Robert Peacock thrust his pregnant wife out into the street in Durham city after he had beaten her "told him it was a shame for him to abuse his wife after that manner".[123] When Richard Greene of Downton, Wiltshire continued to abuse his wife in 1623 "all the street cried shame at him".[124] Some took more active steps to help or rescue the wife. This was even at the risk of also becoming subject to violence, for example Ann Pease was next neighbour to John and Cecily Bradley in Cock yard, Haymarket, and several times went upstairs "to pacify the said John" when he was beating his wife, "who hath sometimes struck her for her pains". When John started to strip his wife of her clothes in an alehouse because he claimed she had been a whore, the wider community became involved. Customers gathered around and some cried "shame upon him", so that John was forced to "run away as fast as he could run, and many after him, crying stop him he hath killed his wife".[125] When Ellenor Younger's husband beat her on the belly when she was pregnant, and called her whore in the streets of Cheapside in 1670, her neighbours came out of their shops and sent for constables.[126] Others claimed that such extreme violence jeopardised a husband's claim to manhood. Edward Trussell of St. Martins in the Fields claimed in 1673 that Elizabeth Hooper was "commonly pitied by her Neighbours and persons of quality for her sufferings and the unmanly Actions wherewith...the said John [her

122 Shakespeare, Othello, (c.1604), IV,i,236.
123 DDR.V.12.f.284v.
124 As cited in Ingram, Church Courts, p.180.
125 CA,Case 1127,(1663),Eee1, ff.62r,63v.
126 CA,Case 10406,(1671),Eee4, f.512v.

husband] hath treated her".[127] Humphrey Mildmay of Queen Camel, Somerset defended himself in court in 1672 by denying that he had ever struck his wife, which, he said he did "account it a very unmanly unworthy thing for any gentleman so to do". One of Humphrey's servants supported his master by claiming that he had never seen Humphrey behave in any "unmanly" way towards his wife.[128] Elizabeth Spinkes brought a cruelty case against her husband to the London consistory court between the years 1711 and 1713. Elizabeth's husband had been troubled by his wife's attempts to "scandalize [his] good name and reputation", which he claimed she had been trying to achieve by telling others of how he beat her. Clearly John Spinkes believed that his honour could be damaged if he was known as a wife beater.[129]

A remarkable expression of public disapproval against wife beating occurred in Bristol in 1667. One witness stated that the cruelty of William Bullocke against his wife was so notorious that it was of common report in Bristol and Bath "and many miles about". His treatment of Posthuma his wife was thought to be "cruel and inhumane" so that he was "much cried shame of ". He was so hated that he was forced to employ a constable "to guard him from the fury of the people and especially the women who knew him to be a base fellow and his said wife to be a good and virtuous Gentlewoman". Few dared to be seen with William, and men boasted that even if they were paid £40 they would not "walk the streets with him". Posthuma took up separate lodgings from her husband, no doubt for her own safety. But anger with William erupted in February 1667 when he decided to walk through Bristol to the house where his wife was living and attempt a reconciliation. A crowd of people gathered around William and followed him, calling him "base names telling him his wife was too good

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127 CA,Case 4747,(1673),Eee5, f.250v-251r.
128 CA,Case 6244,(1672),Ee4, f.51v; Eee4, f.767r.
129 As cited in Hunt, 'Wife Beating, Domesticity and Women's Independence', p.22.

for him". They showed their disapproval by throwing dirt at him, and appeared so menacing that William was forced to take shelter in a house "to avoid the fury of the people".[130] William Bullocke's behaviour towards his wife led him to be socially ostracized from his community, and to become the victim of a loud mocking demonstration characteristic of charivari. Thompson found that it was not until the nineteenth century that the majority of charivaris were triggered by wife beaters rather than husband beaters, so the action against William was probably unusual in this period.[131] But the anger of Bullocke's local community was probably fuelled by the fact that Posthuma was a "good and virtuous Gentlewoman" who did not deserve such vicious treatment from her husband, who was a "base fellow" and a "rogue".

Much of this thesis has shown that male honour codes emphasized the importance of husbands controlling their wives. But in their anxiety to be seen to be in control, some men became overly jealous, suspicious, and hasty in calling their wives whore. The danger was that some men then treated their wives as whores, threatening or actually subjecting them to verbal, *physical, or sexual violence.*[132] *If it could not be proved* that a wife had dishonoured her husband by playing the whore his violence could not be justified. In the eyes of many this behaviour became dishonourable because it demonstrated a lack of self control which could border on madness. A case study of the Boteler marriage shows how the honour codes of the early modern period could

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130 CA,Case 1432,(1667),Eee2, f.538-540.

131 Thompson, Customs, p.505.

132 For sexual violence see the Boteler case below, p.223; CA,Case 1128,(1675),Eee5, f.670r, for a husband who threatens to chain his wife to the bed post and have sex with his whores in front of her; CA,Case 3603,(1664),Ee2, f.208r for a husband who is possibly answering accusations of marital rape; see also, A. Clark, Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England 1770-1845 (London,1987); C.Herrup, '"To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon": Gender and Honour in the Castlehaven Story', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, (forthcoming).

engender domestic violence. Ann Boteler brought a suit for separation to the court of Arches in 1672. Over sixteen years of marriage, according to Ann and the twenty-two witnesses who spoke for her, Oliver had repeatedly called her whore and other abusive names, beaten her and threatened to "beat out" her brains, thrown chamber pots and a chair at her, kicked her out of the house in the middle of the night, boasted of his sexual inconstancy and infected her with the pox. He was alleged to have whipped and beaten three of their children in front of her, dangling the eight year old Elizabeth over three flights of stairs, threatening to drop her if anybody interfered with him. In his need to control his wife Oliver demanded from her total obedience, and he tested and inflated his sense of authority by commanding Ann to perform demeaning and nonsensical tasks. When he went to bed he commanded her to stand by his bed and watch over him all night, even though on one occasion she was pregnant and was only permitted to wear a smock. On another occasion one witness recalled how Oliver "made her kneel down by his bedside" and "forced her to bow and incline herself with her face to the floor", telling her "I will have or will make you as submissive as my spaniel". He tried to force her to drink a glass of wine when she abstained from alcohol, and made her take off her shoes and stockings even when there were servants in the room, saying that she was "not worthy to wipe his shoes". His insistence on obedience even extended to his attempt to force her to yield sexually to him in front of the servants, pulling her clothes off, and then beating her when she refused to oblige him. His violent anger could break out whenever he became suspicious that his wife was disobedient, and could be triggered by his irritation at minute details of her behaviour. On one occasion he became angry and violent when he saw her wear a hood and handkerchief around her neck, saying that he had forbidden her to wear the same, pulling them off her and throwing them into the fire.[133]

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[133] CA,Case 1041,(1672),Ee3, f.738-741r; 745r-746v; Eee4, ff.613v-615v,807-808,815-818r,821v-822;850v-883r; Eee5, f.24v-25r.

Sir Oliver's behaviour was exceptional in its scale and brutality. The combined physical, sexual and mental cruelty which Lady Ann suffered, and Sir Oliver's abuse of both his wife and children was relatively unusual in this period. It is impossible to accept Stone's assertion that there is "nothing uncommon about the cruelty" in this case.[134] What the case provides for us is an example of the extremes to which patriarchal power could be taken, and the lengths to which some men would go to gain control over their wives. Servants and neighbours could continue to condemn the violent behaviour of men such as Sir Oliver, or even label it as madness; one servant described how he had "fantastic fits" before beating Lady Ann, another witness said Sir Oliver was "like a mad man" who frightened his wife and servants when he was in a rage.[135] But whilst the honour codes of which Sir Oliver was a product remained, incidents of unwarranted violence against wives would reoccur. An understanding of male honour provides an important cultural context or even explanation for male domestic violence in the early modern period.

7.6 Responding to the Scolding Wife

In popular thinking a woman who was an adulteress was also likely to be a scold. The community response to scolds has already been discussed, but within ballad literature there were also a number of stories which gave husbands clues as to how to regain control and honour without requiring outside intervention.[136] One category of these cures for scolds advised husbands that they could regain dominance over their wives if they found ways of depriving their partners of their power, forcing them once more to

134 L. Stone, Broken Lives (Oxford,1993), p.37.
135 CA,Case 1041,(1672),Eee4, ff.874r,876r.
136 For the community response to scolds see above, p.150-151.

be reliant on their husbands' good will. The husband in 'My Wife will be my Master' realizes that his wife has become a scold because she controls the household budget, so he vows that if he is ever a widower and decides to remarry, "I mean to keep her poor and the purse I mean to carry."[137] When a plowman marries and his scolding wife refuses to help him by working, he finds 'An Easy Way to tame a Shrew' by giving her nothing to eat until she starts earning her keep by spinning. This "taming a Shrew by gentle means" is similar to the way that Petruchio tames Kate by depriving her of food and sleep in Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew (c.1591).[138] A more severe approach was described in John Taylor's Divers Crab-tree Lectures (1639) where one husband says he tamed his wife with violence, sleep-deprivation, hard work, and a diet of bread and water.[139]

Other husbands in these ballads choose to adopt a more violent approach to their scolding wives. One man threatens to tie up his wife's tongue to make her wish that she had "never used it,/ With such ill-be-fitting terms and so abusing it." His threatened punishment closely resembles the official punishment of the scold's bridle.[140] A doctor in 'A Caution for Scolds' ties the scolding wife to a bed and shaves her head, letting her blood. He tells her that he will then,

> cut her tongue, and when a gallon you have bled,
> 'Twill cure that violent noise in your head.[141]

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137 'My Wife will be my Master', Roxburghe, (c.1640),vol.VII, part I, p.188-189.
138 'An Easy Way to Tame a Shrew', Roxburghe, (1672),vol.VIII, part III, lxxxii-lxxxiii.
139 Capp, The World of John Taylor, p.118.
140 ' A pleasant new Ballad, both merry and witty,/ That sheweth the humours of the wives in the City', Pepys, (c.1630),vol.I, p.376-377; for scold's bridle see above, p.150.
141 'A Caution for Scolds', Roxburghe, (1685-88),vol.III, p.508-510.

The idea of bleeding the scold may have been drawn from popular medical opinion at this time, which held that such methods could restore the crucial balance of body fluids or humours.[142] The practice of actually bleeding the offending organ also has parallels with that used by contemporaries to put a stop to the harmful activities of witches. Just as it was believed that if a witch was scratched or bled she would lose her magical powers, so it follows that if a wife lost blood from her tongue she could lose her ability to scold.[143] The doctor in 'A Caution for Scolds' succeeds, we are told, because he exercises "sharp usage" and keeps her "low". This approach of demeaning and humiliating the scold is also practised in the Restoration ballad 'The Scolding Wife'. The husband and his friends in this ballad make the wife look as if she had been born in Bedlam by tying and wringing her arms until they bleed, tearing her clothes, and fastening an iron chain around one of her legs. He humiliates her in public as she has humiliated him by dragging her through the streets, crying for all his neighbours to see how she has gone mad and is now utterly dependent upon him.[144] In another ballad of the same title dated 1689, a husband blinds his wife with mercury and leads her through the streets with a dog and bell to achieve the same effect.[145]

The stories told in these ballads were probably designed to be sensationalist and shocking, as well as blatantly misogynist. Given the willingness of neighbours and servants to condemn wife beating as discussed above, it is highly unlikely that this degree of violence would have been tolerated in reality. A husband who beat his wife in response to her scolding probably would have been accepted as a necessary

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142 R. Porter, Disease, Medicine and Society in England 1550-1860 (London,1987), p.15.
143 K. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic : Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England (Harmondsworth,1971), p.633-634.
144 'The Scolding Wife', Roxburghe, vol.VII, part I, p.191-193.
145 'The Scolding Wife', Pepys, (1689), vol IV, p.136.

corrective for disobedience, but blinding, or wringing limbs until they bled would have been seen as excessive violence.

Subordination of a wife could be obtained through sexual as well as physical means. Simple Simon was so desperate with misery at his scolding wife that he even tried to poison himself. His wife's scolding only ceased when he managed to "please" his wife in bed. Simon's neighbours knew that he achieved this aim when after one night he so "well pleased his Wife" that "ever since that time he / hath liv'd a quiet Life.[146] This was a cure that struck at the root of the cause of scolding, for if a man could gain sexual control over his wife all other obedience would follow. This was recognised by the unfortunate 'Henpeckt Cuckold' who warns other men to establish sexual control from the start of a marriage,

> Let him that a Widow woes, or courts a Maid to his Froe,
> Take her down in her Wedding-Shoes : Else 'tis a Word and a Blow. [147]

7.7 Choosing Not to Respond to Male Dishonour

In many popular ballads of the seventeenth century men decide not to respond to their wives' infidelity, but instead accept their fate and join with other cuckolded men for good fellowship and a 'contented' life. In 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds' "ten honest tradesmen" meet in a tavern and exchange stories of how they were made cuckolds. They resolve to be contented, "and never repine", and some even make money out of their wives' whoredom.[148] In 'Household Talk' one friend tells the other

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146 'Dead and Alive', Pepys, vol.IV, p.118.
147 'The Henpeckt Cuckold', Roxburghe, (c.1689-91),vol.VII, part II, p.432.
148 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483; for husbands who make money out of their wives' whoredom see above, p.206-208.

that he should not be afraid of being cuckolded since "A Cuckold is a good man's fellow".[149] These men banish all jealous thoughts so instead of their horns causing them pain and suffering, theirs are called 'Bull's Feathers', which are worn with pride at meetings in the Bull-Feather Hall.[150] They laugh at "that which so much troubles others", and share jokes about the impossibility of controlling women's desires. Women's insatiability, a doctor tells his friends, has meant that ever since Eve men have been unable to dominate; "'the best of us all / Cannot be our wives' keepers, they are subject to fall".[151] Whilst sexual jealousy causes rivalry and competitiveness between men, these ballads argue that as cuckolds are from all trades they should join together as 'good fellows'.[152] 'The Glory of all Cuckolds' urges cuckolds to unite for,

> Diana was a Virgin pure,
> Among the rest Chaste and Demure,
> But you know well that I am sure,
> What Acteon did endure.
> If Men have Horns from such as she,
> I pray then let us all agree. [153]

'The Merry Cuckold' teaches others to,

> Learn, as I do, to bear with your wives;
> All you that do so, shall live merry lives.[154]

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149 'Household Talk', Roxburghe,vol.I, p.441-446.
150 'The Bull's Feather', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.418-420; Bull-Feather Hall.
151 Bull-Feather Hall, p.6; 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483.
152 See for example, 'The Cuckoo's Commendation', Pepys,(c.1625),vol.I, p.406-407; 'Cuckold's Haven', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.148-153; 'The Well-Approved Doctor', Pepys, vol.IV, p.149; 'Cuckold's All', Wit and Mirth, p.77-78; 'The Growth of Cuckoldom', Wit and Mirth, p.108-109.
153 'The Glory of all Cuckolds', Wit and Mirth, p.84-85.
154 'The Merry Cuckold', Roxburghe, vol.II, p.5-8.

Given the value attached to keeping wives constant, the idea that in reality men would have happily admitted to their friends that they were cuckolds is ludicrous. What was more likely was that some husbands who did know they were being cuckolded took no action, hoping their shame would never be known by their neighbours, and that their wives would eventually tire of their lovers. 'The London Cuckold' realizes that

> Prating like a Fool is fulsome, silence cures the horned pate.
> Should I blow my trumpet out, I should raise the Rabble rout,
> Have the boys about my ears, and endure their flouts and jeers.[155]

Another husband hopes that his wife will be discreet when she commits adultery, for he would not "care greatly" if his neighbours "knew it not".[156] One ballad advises that if husbands do "cast off" their care and show patience, their wives will leave their vices and lead a new life.[157] Such patience will have its rewards, a mother promises her son in law in 'The Discontented Married Man', for in time his wife's beauty will wear off and her gallants will abandon her.[158] A similar message of patience was the subject of one jest in Braithwait's Ar't asleep Husband ? in which a wife tells her husband,

> 'For your horns, Sir, it is far better for you to shroud them, than to blow them: Cover these, and my continence of life hereafter shall amply redeem my honor.' With which promise, Her Husband (good man) became so well contented, as his patience begot in his wife a love to goodness: So as, the comic conclusion of their life closed with much happiness. [159]

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155 'The London Cuckold', Roxburghe, (1686),vol.VIII, part III, p.603-604.
156 'The Old Man's Complaint', Roxburghe, (c.1650),vol.VIII, part I-II, p.197.
157 M.P., 'The Married Man's Lesson', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.231-236.
158 'The Discontented Married Man', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.295-299.
159 Braithwait, Ar't asleep Husband ?, p.51.

Thomas Whythorne's autobiography told husbands who discovered their wives' infidelity,

> to tell her what is said of her, and thereupon to persuade her and to counsel her to a better life...so peradventure, she will ever after beware of her fault, or else she will work so closely therein, as it shall not be so much seen.[160]

If a husband followed Whythorne's advice, although after his wife's adultery he might lose his self respect, he did not risk losing his social honour, or his sexual reputation in the eyes of others.

But if discovered, a contented or quietly patient husband could be victim to the insult of wittol.[161] As Whythorne explained,

> if he be known to know that his wife is a strumpet, and yet doth keep her still, he shall be reputed to be not only a cuckold but also a witwold. [162]

These men were mocked for their stupidity and lack of jealousy in the face of dishonour,

> they believe so well, that they make it an ill conscience to mistrust any ill though they see an other and their wife in bed together. [163]

The two wives in the ballads 'The Country Weaver' and 'Couragious Anthony' show the power they have gained over their husbands by calling them wittols.[164] Church

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160 Osborn (ed.), The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne, p.26, as cited in Hodgkin, 'Thomas Whythorne', p.36.
161 Also spelt wittal, wittold, witwold, see OED.
162 Autobiography, p.26, as cited in 'Thomas Whythorne', p.36.
163 The Court of good counsell, sig., D.
164 'The West Country Weaver', Roxburghe, (c.1685),vol.VII, part I, p.22-23; 'Couragious Anthony', Pepys, vol.IV, p.146.

court records show that wittol was an insult directed against these men; in 1610 London consistory court heard how Anne Phesey had called William Dynes a wittol, which one witness defined as "to know his wife to be a whore and to permit and suffer to live in such folly and to approve and not find fault therewith".[165] In 1628 in Semington, Wiltshire, Walter Longe declared to William Burges, "thou art a wittol and canst not pull on a hose of thy head for the bigness...of thy horns".[166] Just the prospect of being called wittol fills Ford with horror in The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597), "cuckold? Wittol? Cuckold! The devil himself hath / not such a name." Because Ford does not want to be a wittol, "a secure ass" who "will not be jealous", he embarks on elaborate schemes to catch his wife in adultery.[167]

7.8 Conclusions

Men were expected to respond to their wives' adultery: failure to do so opened them to the further dishonour of being labelled wittols. There was a wide range of different actions men could pursue both within the law courts and outside them. The legal courses of action do not appear to have been popular options judging from the relatively small numbers of men who took their marriage business to the church and secular courts. This may have been because it was important for most men not only to respond to dishonour, but also to restore their honour. By going to law men were allowing others to take over the reins of household government. In contrast, by pursuing the alternatives to legal action: seeking informal reconciliation, financial settlement or by directing physical force against male rivals or adulterous wives, men could remain in control of household affairs. Each of these non-legal options gave

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165 As cited in Gowing, 'Women', p.34; I have modernised the spelling.
166 As cited in Ingram, Church Courts, p.309.
167 Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor, (1597), II,ii,288-290.

husbands the opportunity to send clear messages to the wider community and their wives that they were capable of responding immediately and decisively to any slur on their honour. Our sources to do not allow us to quantify the number of men who responded to dishonour in these extra-legal ways. Recorded cases of wife beating which reached the court of Arches, however, do tell us that there were occasions when households or communities were not prepared to tolerate wife beating as a response to male dishonour.

CONCLUSION

Every man in the seventeenth century was expected to yearn for honour, a good name or favourable reputation. Honour brought with it status, respect and prestige. Within all social classes demonstrating sexual honour was vital for the establishment of manhood. From his adolescence a man learnt that his honour depended on exercising gender control over the sexual behaviour of the women with which he was associated; whether it was his pre-marital lover, wife, daughters, sisters, or female servants. The loss of this control soon became apparent within the household and to the wider community. Scolding wives mocked their husbands for their loss of honour, and a variety of popular customs and rituals could be employed to shame the cuckold. The importance of sexual honour, and the fear of the consequences which would follow if it was lost made some men prone to jealousy. This jealousy could lead to husbands defensively protecting their honour by restricting their wives' freedoms, or to violent angry reactions against wives who they believed had been adulterous. Whatever course of action jealousy took, as behaviour which showed fear and frequently a lack of self control, it was itself shameful and dishonourable. Husbands were expected to react when their honour was questioned, and many did so, either by themselves taking defamation and marriage separation cases to the courts, or by encouraging their wives to act on their behalf. But the many drawbacks of the legal system, which could draw attention to dishonour as well as act to restore honour, meant that some took matters into their own hands. Fights or duels broke out when men insulted each other, and some husbands beat their wives when they believed their honour had been betrayed. The desire for honour affected men's everyday relationships with each other, and within their marriages and families.

> We need to understand how patriarchy has worked in certain times and places, how it has been challenged, accepted and changed by women and men, and how it has adapted and adjusted to changing times.[1]

This thesis has examined an important aspect of how patriarchy worked in the seventeenth century. For the concept of honour was vital to its operation. Men learnt that their honour depended on sexual control of women, and women were taught by men that female honour rested on chastity and obedience. This honour system was intended to empower men as it allowed them to rule over and subordinate women. The values of these honour codes were instilled from childhood, and the penalties which shamed men and women who did not follow them were great. There are indicators that this was a highly effective system; across the country large numbers of women filled the church courts to defend sexual reputation. Legal records also bear witness to the men who took a variety of actions to exhibit their honour to others, and to restore damaged honour. The sheer number of references to honour in popular ballads, drama, and the conduct literature of the period shows us that it was a vital concept in the discussion of social and marital relationships. All these literary sources were didactic, and they can be studied to discover what male behaviour contemporaries thought should be worthy of honour. It has been demonstrated that drama and ballads also reveal the tensions which existed in the operation of the honour codes. Since male honour was concerned with not losing control, it is unlikely that in reality many men freely discussed their fears about the possibility of losing this control during courtship and within married life. Plays in particular can serve the purpose of,

> laying bare a secret portion of ourselves...This is indeed the impression we get after seeing a stirring drama. What has just interested us is not so much what we have been told about others as the glimpse we have caught of

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[1] J.M. Bennett, 'Medieval Women, Modern Women: Across the Great Divide', in D. Aers (ed.), Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing (London,1992), p.164; see also, J.M. Bennett, 'Feminism and History', Gender and History, vol.1, no.3, (1989), p.260-267.

> ourselves - a whole host of ghostly feelings, emotions and events that would fain have come into real existence.[2]

By studying fictional sources this thesis has attempted to reach to the heart of the "ghostly feelings, emotions and events" which concern for honour provoked. It has been shown that notions of honour penetrated deep into the male psyche, stimulating emotions such as jealousy, guilt, and fear.

Whilst the concept of honour may have been sufficiently powerful to affect men's subconscious as well as their conscious minds, this thesis has also shown that there were significant weaknesses within the honour system. The behaviour of some women and men challenged and questioned the patriarchies which the system of honour created. These weaknesses in the honour system demonstrated that men's domination over women was by no means assured. Firstly, male honour was unstable because it rested on female chastity, an enigma which within marriage could not be seen or proved. Unless a man trusted his wife's word, or caught her in flagrante delicto, he would never know for certain whether she was a virgin on her wedding day, and if she had remained constant to him throughout the marriage.[3] This potentially gave women great power to shame their husbands and question their manhood; a matter which playwrights throughout the period acknowledged. In Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida (c.1602) Pandarus recognises that Troilus should not waste time with words in his courtship with Cressida, but should "give her deeds", warning that "she'll bereave you o'th' deeds too, if she call your activity in question." Troilus, faced with a woman who is sufficiently worldly wise to know that "all lovers swear more performance than they are able", knows that his honour depends on sexually satisfying Cressida. Her comments on his performance after they have consummated the relationship will be crucial in establishing his manhood,

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[2] Bergson, Laughter, p.160.

[3] See above, pp.72-87,166-168.

Praise us as we
are tasted, allow us as we prove. Our head shall go bare
till merit crown it [4]

In the 1616 play The Honest Lawyer a cuckold reveals the power of women to destroy male honour as he complains of how his dominant position has been jeopardised by his wife's adultery,

Man; the pride of heaven's creation,
Abstract of Nature, that in his small volume
Contains the whole world's Text, and heaven's impression:
His Makers Image, Angels mate, Earth's great wonder;
Made to guide all, by woman is brought under.
That harmony, fair Nature made to stand,
Is forced out of tune by woman's hand.
A woman hath deform'd me. See, I look
Like any beast has horns: an Ass may boast
Himself a horn-less Gentleman before me.
Yet let not clouds of passion choke my reason.
Why? what's a Cuckold? .....
It is a man, whose wife plays the whore.[5]

By the Restoration period men on the stage were expressing the concern that their sexual honour was at stake because women had learnt to manipulate the honour system. Women in Etherege's She Would if She Could (1667/8), Dryden's Marriage a la Mode (1671), and Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675) all pretend or seem to be virtuous whilst all the while engaging in highly dishonourable behaviour. The final line of The Country Wife (1675): "We women - there's coz'ning us!" ends a play which warns men that they are fools to think that women would abide with an honour system which restrains their freedoms and brings them no advantages. In this play Lady Fidget warns,

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[4] Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida (c.1602), III,ii,52-87.
[5] S.S., The Honest Lawyer, (London,1616), I,i,9-21.

> why should you not think that we
> women make use of our reputation, as you men of
> yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion?
> Our virtue is like the statesman's religion, the Quaker's
> word, the gamester's oath, and the great man's honour -
> but to cheat those that trust us. [6]

At the end of the seventeenth century, as at its beginning, men were aware of the fragility of their honour when it rested on female behaviour. The drama of the period continued to voice the male fears which many would have not dared to express. In reality it took an outspoken and self assured woman such as Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle, in 1664 to openly admit to what few women would have denied;

> we oftener enslave men than men enslave us. They seem to govern the world, but we really govern the world, in that we govern men: for what man is he that is not governed by a woman more or less?" [7]

The second main weakness in the honour system was that it created "subordinate masculinities". As Tosh has explained men who belong to these subordinate groups are those, "whose crime is that they undermine patriarchy from within or discredit it in the eyes of women. Sometimes an entire persona is demonized...sometimes specific forms of male behaviour are singled out."[8] In seventeenth century England the men who refused or failed to adhere to the honour

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[6] Wycherley, The Country Wife (1675), V,iv,102-107.
[7] M. Cavendish, CCXI Sociable Letters (1664), p.27, as cited in N.H. Keeble (ed.), The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman (London,1994), p.194.
[8] Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity', p.191.

codes were subordinated under those who achieved honour. The personas which were targeted were the cuckold and the wittol, and the behaviours which were singled out were effeminacy on the one extreme, and pathological jealousy at the other. These individuals and behavioural tendencies were rejected or condemned as dishonourable. So the male honour system did not serve to empower all men; those who did not conform to its requirements found themselves disempowered, slandered, and rejected.

A number of different mechanisms were in place within seventeenth century society which attempted to enable men to cope with these weaknesses in the honour system. Guidance was on offer in both Puritan prescriptive literature and in more popular ballads and plays which laid emphasis for women on the importance of chastity, and advised men on ways to control their wives. Most Puritan conduct book writers defended the need for female chastity by referring to the scriptures. No doubt ministers such as Gouge quoted the scriptural passages in their sermons as well as their writings, so we can be sure that illiterate as well as literate women would have been familiar with them. Proverbs such as "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh him ashamed is as corruption in his bones", and Biblical directives to women such as "thy desire shall be subject to thine husband", were particularly popular in these works.[9] Adultery was condemned by these writers because it was a sin, which would be avoided if wives respected God; "above all seek to plant in her Religion, for she cannot love God but withall she must honour thee".[10] But within this teaching there must have existed an uneasy awareness amongst ministers that they were insisting on a standard of behaviour for women which many of their male parishioners could not,

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[9] Proverbs 12.4 and Genesis 3.16; for citations of these quotations see for example, Rich, The Excellency, p.29; R. Snawsel, A Looking-Glasse For Married Folks (London,1631), title page; Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.270.

[10] Niccholes, A Discourse of Marriage, p.35; for adultery as a sin see also, Cooke, A White Sheete; and Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.222.

or would not maintain. Writers who argued that adultery was equally sinful for men and women were fighting against deeply entrenched notions of male sexuality which had maintained a double sexual standard for centuries.[11] The remoteness of these conduct book writers from the realities of most men's married lives is further illustrated by their advice to men on how to sexually control their wives. Their advice that good and regular sex, or "due benevolence" as Gouge called it, was the key to preventing adultery was probably followed by many couples.[12] But their belief that this sexual control could be extended to a control of emotions and desires was hopelessly unrealistic and practicably impossible. One writer advised a husband in his relationship with his wife to "steal away her private will, and appetite, so that of two bodies there may be only one heart". Another argued that "the husband ought not to be satisfied with the use of his wife's body, but in that he hath also the possession of her will and affections".[13] No man could possess the will and affections of his wife, however great his desire for control. Othello's curse as a husband of a suspected adulterous wife, that "we call these delicate creatures ours, And not their appetites!" remained unanswered.[14]

An alternative coping mechanism was employed in much of the popular literature of the time. In many ballads and plays of the period women were derided as insatiable by nature. Frequently the writers of these forms of popular entertainment also turned to the scriptures to find examples of evil women who been tempted by sin and had deceived men. Eve and Delilah were favourites in the ballads of the

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[11] See above, p.107-120.

[12] Gouge, Of Domesticall Duties, p.223-227; Whateley, A Bride Bush, p.14-25; Rogers, Matrimoniall Honour, chapter VIII; see also Fletcher, 'The Protestant idea of marriage', p.175-179.

[13] E. Tilney, A brief and pleasant discourse of duties in marriage, (London,1568), and Dod and Cleaver, A Godly Form of Household Government (London,1614), as cited in Newman, Fashioning Femininity, p.27.

[14] Shakespeare, Othello (c.1604), III,iii,273-274; for further discussion of these issues see above, p.87-99.

period.[15] Playwrights also sometimes give men a platform to air anti-female sentiments. For example Heartfree in Vanbrugh's The Provoked Wife (1697) is portrayed as a stereotypical woman hater who regards all women as descendants of "old grandmother Eve". Heartfree declares that when he examines womens' hearts he finds,

> pride, vanity, covetousness, indiscretion, but above all things - malice: plots eternally a-forging to destroy one another's reputations, and as honestly to charge the levity of men's tongues with the scandal; hourly debates how to make poor gentlemen in love with 'em, with no other intent but to use 'em like dogs when they are done; a constant desire of doing more mischief, and an everlasting war waged against truth and good nature.[16]

Such misogyny probably appealed to men who doubted their ability to control their wives. Cuckolds could be comforted with the knowledge that they were 'good fellows' whose fate was shared by men from all social groups, and since the beginning of time.[17] Female talk thought critical of men's sexual behaviour was labelled as idle gossip, and persistent and disruptive gossips were stereotyped as scolds. The responsibility for marriage breakdown was conveniently shifted onto women. Men were able to use this language of misogyny in courts. The law penalised women more than men for sexual deviance, and the stories of marriage told by husbands in marriage separation cases show that they believed that the church courts would be receptive and sympathetic to accounts of wives acting as uncontrollable whores. Men were able to draw upon the popular tradition of female insatiability to clear advantage.[18]

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[15] See for example, 'The Batchelor's Delight', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.423-426; 'The Catalogue of Contented Cuckolds', Roxburghe, vol.III, p.481-483; 'A Ditty of Sampson', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.459-464.

[16] Vanbrugh, The Provoked Wife, II,i,162-172.

[17] See for example, 'Household Talk', Roxburghe, vol.I, p.441-446.

[18] See above, p.194-198.

But the most immediate and frequent reaction to perceived loss of honour was not legal action, which could often prove lengthy and costly, but physical action. Whilst the gentry may have occasionally fought duels over sexual honour, a more common sight was probably two men fighting with fists. This was the sort of revenge that brought immediate satisfaction, and as fights were usually witnessed by others, for the victor the restoration of honour.[19] Men's behaviour with each other holds clues to their behaviour with their wives. To combat women's perceived insatiable sexuality which threatened to dishonour men by subverting the gender hierarchy, some men used physical means to try and control women. Community rituals such as the ducking of scolds and carting of whores employed this physical control in public. In the private sphere, many men probably attempted to show sexual control in the bedchamber. But it also seems likely that in some marriages men played a power game in which they used violence, or threats of violence, to counter or dispel their fears about female insurrection by invoking fear within their wives. When men used physical strength against their wives, they were able to assert their most obvious difference from women. The relative powerlessness of most women in the face of male violence must have helped to reassure men of their dominant gender role.[20]

But within most marriages wife beating was not regarded as the means to maintain honour; it was widely recognised that repeated beatings did not teach women chastity. Rather many thought that wife beating should only be occasioned as a response to female behaviour which had clearly dishonoured the husband, most notably if adultery had taken place. Furthermore, if a man was to avoid the disapproval of others he had to demonstrate that the beating had been administered with moderation and reason. Of course, the judgement of what beating was

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[19] See above, p.209-212.
[20] See above, pp.92, 213-217.

reasonable would vary from household to household, and from community to community. Each occasion of violence involved a multitude of different circumstances which witnesses probably took into account. But the checks on male violence were there, neighbourhoods did condemn some incidents of wife beating as dishonourable, and some wives were able to prosecute their husbands for cruelty. Physical violence was not the key to overcoming the weaknesses in the honour system.[21]

Many husbands probably pinned their hopes on the belief that trust and love for their wives would prevent infidelity. But these were no guarantees against female infidelity and the loss of honour which followed. The honour system rested on a web of uncertainties in which men and women could find themselves victims. The cuckold as a man who had lost his sexual honour could be subject to the endless taunts of his neighbours: women's freedoms of speech and movement could be constrained by their jealous husbands. Ultimately, men would have to find new ways to maintain their dominant position in the gender hierarchy. A system of power relationships which attempted to subordinate women simply by insisting on female sexual chastity would never prove stable or secure, but would be constantly challenged and questioned. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the image of woman progressively desexualised. An ideology of conduct for women which assumed that it was not only sinful, but also unnatural for them to be unchaste was taught to women in a more systematic manner than had ever been the case in the seventeenth century. If female sexuality could not be controlled then it could be denied. The concept of male honour gained a new, and more secure footing.

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[21] See above, pp.96-99, 218-224.

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